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Introduction and Purpose of This Manual

This manual provides AmeriCorps programs with the resources necessary to establish a foundation for running a high quality program. In this manual, you will find policies, processes, and procedures related to the California Commission as well as the Corporation for National and Community Service. The chapters will cover AmeriCorps Background and Grantmaking, CaliforniaVolunteers AmeriCorps Operating Policies and Processes, and CaliforniaVolunteers Program Standards.

This manual does not supersede any of the requirements established by the terms, conditions, and provisions of an AmeriCorps grant or contract, or the standard federal requirements applicable to all federal grants. Likewise, the information contained in this resource manual does not include all the legal requirements of an AmeriCorps grant, nor does it constitute CNCS' official definitive interpretation of the law, regulations, and policies related to AmeriCorps programs. Rather, it is intended as a resource guide to help program staff establish and maintain sound operations in compliance with federal and state statutes, regulations, provisions, and policies.

All forms referenced in this manual and many sample documents are posted on the CaliforniaVolunteers website in the section dedicated to our AmeriCorps grantees—Grantee Central. We encourage you to visit the website often and build a relationship with your program associate and other staff members of CaliforniaVolunteers. Together, through the power of service, we can make a difference in the lives of Californians.

GENERAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION¹

History of National Service

When faced with challenges, our nation has always relied on the dedication and action of its citizens. The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) carries on a long tradition of citizen involvement by providing opportunities for Americans of all ages to improve their communities through service.

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, President Franklin D. Roosevelt created the Civilian Conservation Corps. Four million young people joined in response to his call to service, restoring the nation's parks, revitalizing the economy, and supporting their families and themselves. For 11 years the Civilian Conservation Corps provided billions of dollars in services and enabled millions of families to live in dignity.

During the 1940's, the GI Bill linked wartime service to educational benefits, offering returning World War II veterans the opportunity to pursue higher education in partial compensation for service to their country. Veterans improved their own lives by attending college. They also contributed mightily to America's future. With the education they received, those citizens helped spark the economic boom that helped make America the world's leading economy.

In the 1960s the call to service came from President John F. Kennedy, who challenged Americans in his inaugural address "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country." In response to this challenge, the Peace Corps was born. The Peace Corps continues to engage thousands of volunteers who travel the world far and wide, building schools where none existed, helping farmers provide food for the hungry, and creating hospitals to care for the sick. After returning from overseas, Peace Corps volunteers put their new knowledge of others to work at home, in the spirit of citizenship, changing America for the better.

President Lyndon B. Johnson brought the spirit of the Peace Corps home to America by creating Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA) in 1964. VISTA, which is now part of AmeriCorps, continues to fund programs under the sponsorship of local public agencies or nonprofit organizations to improve the condition of people living in under-served, low-income communities throughout America. Other initiatives such as the Retired and Senior Volunteer Corps (RSVP), the Foster Grandparent Program, and the Senior Companion Program were developed in order to engage older Americans in the work of improving the nation.

¹ From *Insider's Guide to AmeriCorps Program Management*
California AmeriCorps Resource Manual
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In 1970, Congress created the Youth Conservation Corps (YCC), a summer environmental employment program for youth ages 15-18. This was folded into the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act (CETA) in 1974. In 1978, a Young Adult Conservation Corps (YACC) became part of CETA, but was eliminated in 1982 by the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) which did not include national service programming. Some components of YCC and YACC remained active in several states, funded through public and private dollars, and, in 1976, California became the first state to create its own youth conservation program, the California Conservation Corps. Private funders helped create additional youth corps programs during the seventies, including the Youth Volunteer Corps of America, City Year, and YouthBuild. Associations such as Youth Service America (YSA) and the National Association of Service and Conservation Corps (NASCC) were formed to work with the various youth service movements. Youth service programming grew on college campuses, sponsored by such national programs as the Campus Outreach

President George H. W. Bush helped spark a revival of interest in national service when he instituted the White House Office of National Service in 1989. In 1990 Congress passed the National and Community Service Act, which created a Commission on National and Community Service whose mission was to “renew the ethic of civic responsibility in the United States.” Full implementation began in 1992, when the commission awarded \$64 million in grants to support four broad types of state and local community service efforts. These initiatives were the Serve-America programs (now Learn and Serve) which involved school-aged youth in community service and service-learning through a variety of school and community-based activities; Higher Education Innovative Projects aimed at involving college students in community service and at promoting community service at educational institutions; American Conservation and Youth Service Corps, supporting summer and year-round youth corps initiatives that engage both in- and out-of-school youth in community service work; and the National and Community Service Demonstration Models, for programs that were potential models for large-scale national service. The National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC), a demonstration program to explore the possibility of using post-Cold War military resources to help solve problems here at home, was enacted later as part of the 1993 Defense Authorization Act. It is a residential service program modeled on the Depression-era Civilian Conservation Corps and the United States military.

President Bill Clinton sponsored the **National and Community Service Trust Act**, a revision of the National and Community Service Act of 1990, which was passed by a bipartisan coalition of members of Congress and signed into law on September 21, 1993. The legislation created a new federal agency, the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), to administer federally-funded national service programs. The law created AmeriCorps, which was designed to support local, state, and national organizations across the nation, and involves Americans in results-driven community service. Individual AmeriCorps participants, known as “members,” serve for a year, during which they receive a

living allowance. After service, members receive an education award, administered by the National Service Trust, and paid as a voucher redeemable for current education costs at colleges, universities, other post-secondary institutions, and approved school-to-work programs, or to pay back qualified student loans already incurred. The National and Community Service Trust legislation drew on the principles of both the Civilian Conservation Corps and the GI Bill, encouraging Americans to serve and rewarding those who do. CNCS also assumed management of the programs from two previous agencies, ACTION, which was responsible for running VISTA and the National Senior Service Corps programs, and the more recent Commission on National and Community Service, including the NCCC, forming a new network of national service programs.

In his State of the Union address on January 29, 2002, President George W. Bush called on all Americans to serve their country for the equivalent of two years and announced the creation of the USA Freedom Corps, an umbrella network for volunteerism. A coordinating council housed at the White House and chaired by the President is working to expand and strengthen federal service programs like the Peace Corps, Citizen Corps, AmeriCorps, and Senior Corps, and to raise awareness of and break down barriers to service opportunities within all federal government agencies. Several bills have been introduced in Congress over the past three years to increase funding for national service and to reauthorize the National and Community Service Act.

KEY NATIONAL SERVICE PROGRAMS

CNCS provides opportunities for Americans of all ages and backgrounds to serve their communities and the nation through three programs: AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and Learn and Serve America. Members and volunteers serve with national and community nonprofit organizations, faith-based groups, schools, and local agencies to help meet pressing community needs. CNCS is part of USA Freedom Corps and seeks to foster civic responsibility, strengthens the ties that bind us together as a people, and provides educational opportunity for those who make a substantial commitment to service.

Senior Corps taps the skills, talents, and experience of more than 500,000 Americans age 55 and older to meet a wide range of community challenges through three programs: Foster Grandparents, Senior Companions, and the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). These grantees receive funding through annual appropriations and are selected by CNCS State Offices on a non-competitive basis. In addition, Senior Corps programs may compete nationally for funding as Programs of National Significance (PNS).

Foster Grandparent Program: Foster Grandparents serve as mentors, tutors, and caregivers for at-risk children and youth with special needs through a variety of community organizations, including schools, hospitals, drug treatment facilities, correctional institutions, and Head Start and day-care centers. In fiscal year 2003, more than 32,500 Foster Grandparents provided 27.9 million hours of service at 12,600 stations to tend to the needs of 263,600 young children and teenagers. Local nonprofit organizations and public agencies receive grants to sponsor and operate local Foster Grandparent projects.

The Foster Grandparent Program is open to people age 60 and over with limited incomes. Volunteers serve 15-40 hours per week and receive a small stipend. Organizations that address the needs of abused and neglected children, troubled teens, young mothers, premature infants, and children with physical disabilities work with the local Foster Grandparent program to place and coordinate the services of the Foster Grandparent volunteers. Local partners (called volunteer stations) include children's services agencies, child and youth-oriented charities, and faith-based institutions.

Senior Companion Program: Senior Companions serve one-on-one with frail older adults, adults with disabilities, and those with terminal illnesses who have difficulty completing everyday tasks. They assist with such activities as grocery shopping, bill paying, and transportation to medical appointments. Senior Companions also provide short periods of relief to primary caregivers. Because of the program, thousands of citizens are able to live with dignity in their own homes.

The Senior Companion Program is open to healthy individuals age 60 and over with limited incomes. Volunteers serve 15-40 hours per week and receive a small stipend. In fiscal year 2003, 16,500 Senior Companions provided 13.9 million hours of service to tend to the needs of 57,700 adult clients. Local nonprofit organizations and public agencies receive grants to sponsor and operate Senior Companion projects. Community organizations that address the health needs of older persons work with local SCP projects to place and coordinate the services of the SCP volunteers. These local partners (volunteer stations) include hospitals, area agencies on aging, and home health groups. The stations' professional staff identifies individuals who need assistance and work with SCP projects to place them with Senior Companions.

Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP): RSVP volunteers serve in a diverse range of nonprofit organizations, public agencies, and faith-based groups. RSVP is open to people age 55 and over regardless of income. Among other activities, RSVP volunteers mentor at-risk youth, organize neighborhood watch programs, test drinking water for contaminants, teach English to immigrants, and lend their business skills to community groups that provide critical social services.

In fiscal year 2003, approximately 468,600 volunteers provided 78.1 million hours of service at an estimated 63,800 local organizations. Local organizations, both public and private, receive grants to sponsor and operate RSVP projects in their community. These projects recruit seniors to serve from a few hours a month to almost full-time, though the average commitment is four hours a week. Most volunteers are paired with local community and faith-based organizations that are already helping to meet community needs.

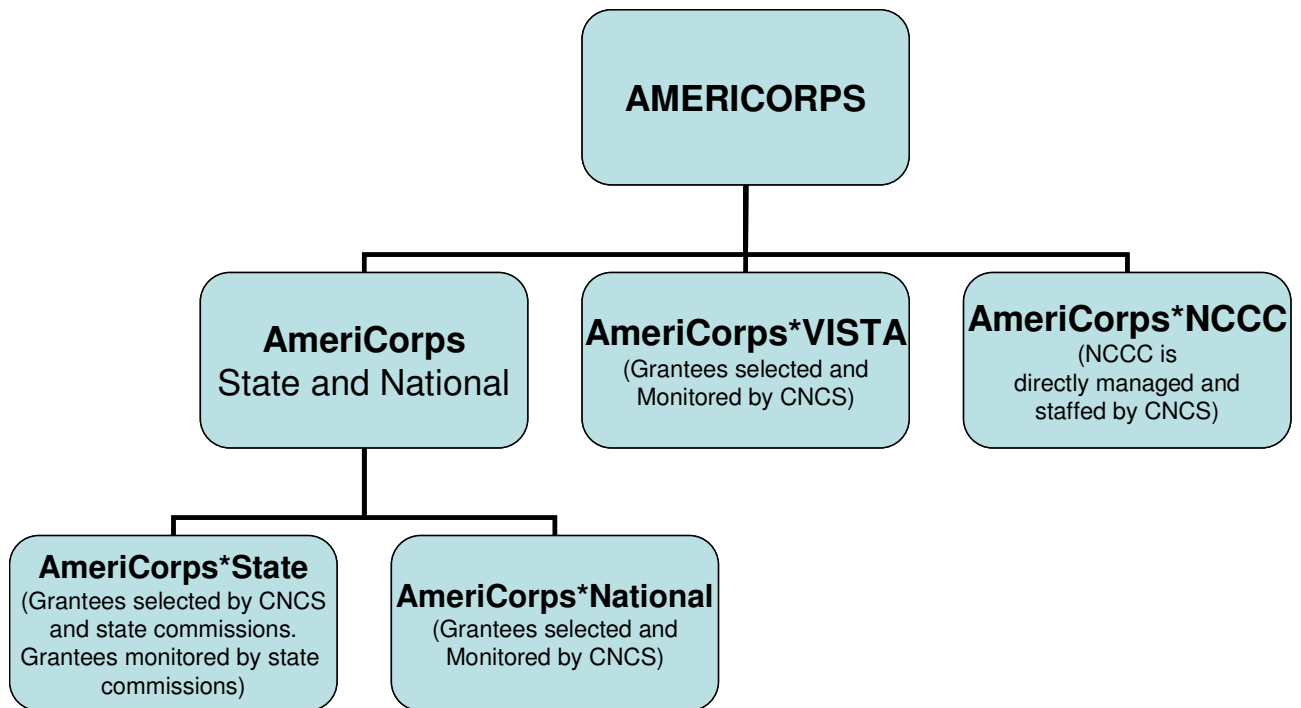
AmeriCorps, sometimes referred to as “the domestic Peace Corps,” is the national service program that engages Americans of all ages and backgrounds in results-driven service in the five priority areas of education, public safety, environment, homeland security, and other human needs. AmeriCorps programs provide full and part-time opportunities for members to provide service to their communities through community organizations and agencies. Nearly 500,000 people have served in AmeriCorps since the program was founded in 1994.

Learn and Serve America provides grants to schools, colleges, and nonprofit groups to support efforts to engage nearly one million students from kindergarten through college in community service linked to academic achievement and the development of civic skills. This type of learning, called service-learning, improves communities while preparing young people for a lifetime of responsible citizenship.

Learn and Serve grants are used to create new programs or to replicate existing programs, as well as to provide training and development to staff, faculty, and volunteers. CNCS funds state education agencies, State Service Commissions, nonprofit organizations, Indian tribes, and U.S. territories, which then select and fund local service-learning programs through Learn and Serve K-12. Institutions of higher education and consortia are funded directly through Learn and Serve Higher Education.

AmeriCorps Program Overview

The AmeriCorps network of programs is comprised of AmeriCorps*State and National, AmeriCorps*VISTA, and AmeriCorps*NCCC. While State and National, VISTA and NCCC programs all fall under the CNCS AmeriCorps “family,” each program has its own unique focus, organization, and structure.



AmeriCorps*State and National members participate in local service programs operated by community based nonprofit organizations, local and state government entities, Indian tribes, territories, institutions of higher education, local school and police districts, and partnerships among any of the above. Members serving in these programs help meet communities’ critical education, public safety, environment, homeland security, and other human needs.

AmeriCorps*State: Approximately three-quarters of AmeriCorps grant funding goes to State Service Commissions appointed by governors. Commissions distribute and monitor grants to local organizations and agencies in response to state-specific local needs. These programs are called AmeriCorps*State programs. AmeriCorps*State also includes the Territories programs, and State Education Award programs.

AmeriCorps*National: The other quarter of AmeriCorps funding is dedicated to the AmeriCorps*National portfolio to provide grants directly to national public and nonprofit organizations that sponsor service grantees, Indian tribes, and consortia formed across two or more states, including faith-based and community organizations, higher education institutions, and public agencies, also through a competitive grants process. Grants assist

these groups in recruiting, training and placing AmeriCorps members to meet critical community needs in education, public safety, homeland security, health, and the environment.

AmeriCorps*National Directs: National Directs are national nonprofit organizations operating in at least two states that run a multi-site/AmeriCorps program. They are responsible for administering a grant process for their operating sites (subgrantees), monitoring and evaluating them to ensure they comply with legal and grant requirements, offering technical assistance and training specific to AmeriCorps, and providing financial oversight.

AmeriCorps*National Education Program: An AmeriCorps program that receives minimal financial support from the Corporation for National and Community Service and has less fiscal reporting requirements. Because of the minimal financial support, EAP grants are best suited for pre-existing service programs or for organizations with other sources of funding, for whom becoming part of AmeriCorps will add value to their program. For instance, the association with AmeriCorps might allow a program to recruit more service participants, to recruit a higher caliber of service participants, or serve more beneficiaries.

AmeriCorps*Indian Tribes: An AmeriCorps program sponsored by an Indian Tribe. An AmeriCorps*Indian Tribe program uses service and volunteering to address compelling community needs.

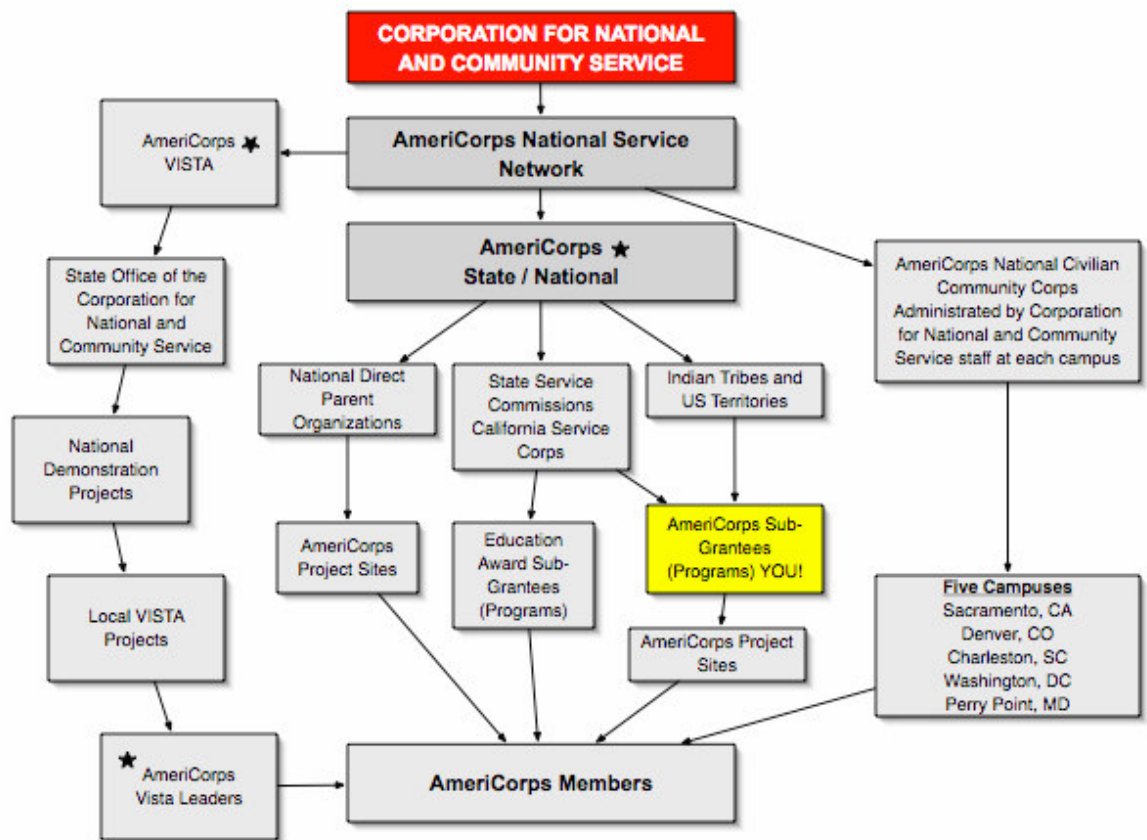
AmeriCorps*National Professional Corps: An AmeriCorps program that recruits and places qualified participants in positions as teachers, nurses and other health care providers, police officers, early childhood development staff, engineers, or other professionals providing service to meet educational, public safety, human, or environmental needs in communities with an inadequate number of such professionals.

AmeriCorps*VISTA members serve low-income communities and families across the country. Members of AmeriCorps*VISTA work and live in the communities they serve, creating or expanding programs that continue after they complete their terms of service. AmeriCorps*VISTA members are assigned to local project sponsors and focus on building organizational capacity, mobilizing community resources, and reducing poverty through increasing self-reliance. VISTA project host sites are selected by the State Offices of CNCS, with the approval of each state's governor.

AmeriCorps*NCCC is a 10-month residential national service program for more than 1,200 members ages 18 to 24. Based on the successful models of the Civilian Conservation Corps of the 1930s and the U.S. military, it sends members in teams of 10 to 12 on "spikes" to help nonprofit groups provide disaster relief, preserve the environment, build homes for low-income families, tutor children, and meet other challenges. AmeriCorps*NCCC teams meet community needs in cooperation with non-profit programs, state and local agencies, and

other community groups. Members live at one of three regional campuses, Western, Central and Eastern with all three regions supporting the Gulf Coast region. Members are trained in CPR, first aid, and mass care, and can be assigned to new duties on short notice; they are particularly well-suited to meeting the emerging homeland security needs of the nation.

Figure 1: Programs and Partners Organization Chart



All AmeriCorps programs have three major goal areas:

Needs and Service Activities: AmeriCorps programs provide a variety of specific and identifiable services that address community needs. Such direct service activities are performed by AmeriCorps members, often with additional community volunteers and provide a direct impact for the beneficiaries served.

Participant Development: AmeriCorps expands opportunities, helping those who help AmeriCorps. Because of their AmeriCorps service, members develop additional skills, gain valuable experience, and receive education awards that can be used for post-secondary education or to repay student loans. To help ensure that members are prepared for and benefit from their service, programs provide members with training and experiential

education to develop the skills needed for their specific service assignment, as well as leadership, civic engagement, and life skills.

Strengthening Communities: AmeriCorps strengthens communities by involving citizens directly in serving community needs. AmeriCorps members help bring individuals and groups from different backgrounds together to cooperate in achieving constructive change and to solve critical community problems. They also help develop collaborations and working relationships with other nonprofit, government, and for-profit organizations in the community.

Key Organizations

CNCS provides opportunities for Americans of all ages and backgrounds to serve their communities and the nation through AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and Learn and Serve America.

There are two main divisions in CNCS' AmeriCorps headquarters staff: AmeriCorps*State and AmeriCorps*National. Each State Service Commission has a specific CNCS AmeriCorps*State program officer assigned as their primary liaison at headquarters; each National Program grantee has a specific CNCS AmeriCorps*National program officer assigned as their primary liaison. CNCS program officers are the frontline support for program staff, assisting with any issues that arise including locating needed information and clarifications of policy. Program officers are also the primary monitors at headquarters of how things are going in the states for which they are responsible. Program officers work closely with other units at CNCS to provide quality support to the field.

CNCS also operates offices in each state. These offices are responsible for administering AmeriCorps*VISTA projects as well as the three Senior Corps programs. The CNCS employees in these locations assist with the monitoring of National AmeriCorps programs sites, solicit and review Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service grants in their states, and participate in cross-program planning initiatives, including development of State Service Plans. One of them, usually the state office director, serves as an ex-officio member of the State Service Commission.

State service commissions exist to foster a bipartisan state-level commitment to advancing service initiatives in the state. State service commissions have direct accountability for grantees managing local AmeriCorps programs. Commissions monitor and evaluate grantees to ensure they comply with legal and grant requirements, are progressing well towards meeting performance measures, and have high quality service projects and management systems. Each commission also has the broad role of developing and communicating a statewide vision and ethic of service, and promoting that vision throughout the state.

State service commissions administer AmeriCorps*State grants on behalf of CNCS. There are two separate sources of funding for these AmeriCorps grants: state (1) formula and (2) competitive funds. CNCS provides each state commission with an annual allotment of *formula funds*. The amount of formula funding for each commission is determined by a formula based on each state's population. State commissions have the authority to award formula grants at their own discretion, provided that they follow basic guidelines set out by CNCS. In addition to providing states with formula grants, CNCS also administers a national competitive to award state *competitive funds*. Commissions that are interested in securing competitive funds must administer a grantmaking process that is used to select their state's applicants for the national competition. CNCS then reviews applications from all states and selects a slate of grantees. While CNCS provides all state commissions with discretionary formula funds, there is no guarantee that a state will receive competitive funding in any given grantmaking cycle.

National Directs are national nonprofit organizations operating in at least two states that run a multi-site/AmeriCorps program. They are responsible for administering a grant process for their operating sites (subgrantees), monitoring and evaluating them to ensure they comply with legal and grant requirements, offering technical assistance and training specific to AmeriCorps, and providing financial oversight. Both National Directs and their sites work in collaboration with State Service Commissions and CNCS State Offices by attending statewide events and conferences and keeping them informed of their activities.

State education agencies (SEAs) receive and administer the school-based Learn and Serve funds. These monies are distributed to SEAs on a formula basis and support service-learning activities for K-12. States have significant latitude in how they design their programs. For example, some states offer large grants for district-wide implementation of service-learning. Other states offer smaller grants to individual schools, classrooms, or teachers. Unlike AmeriCorps, SEAs apply for funding for service-learning and then decide which programs/districts to fund through a competitive process that occurs after the fact. Funds support both the implementation and capacity-building of service-learning. In addition, SEAs may choose to apply for other Learn and Serve funds on a competitive basis. These funds may vary each year depending on CNCS' priorities and appropriations. SEAs are responsible for monitoring, reporting, and training the CNCS-funded service-learning programs they administer.

Other stakeholders include corporations, private foundations, elected officials, the media, and some state agencies.

Role of State Service Commissions

When the Corporation for National and Community Service was created in 1993, Congress charged states with a critical role in managing national service resources. The National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993 gives State Service Commissions a vital role. These 15 to 25 member bodies are appointed by the governor with a broad mandate.

State Service Commissions provide Corporation funding to AmeriCorps programs in their states through annual grant competitions. In addition, the Commissions monitor and evaluate these AmeriCorps programs. Every year, governors and State Service Commissions distribute more than \$250 million from federal national service funds, which in turn leverage more than \$100 million in local funding to support citizen service and volunteering in America.

Two Major Activities of State Service Commissions

1. Administer AmeriCorps*State programs
 - Administer two-thirds of AmeriCorps*State and National Subtitle C funds
 - Support local programs and work with them to ensure they are high quality
 - Evaluate applications and monitor programs to ensure they comply with legal and grant requirements and are progressing well toward meeting program objectives and have high quality service projects
 - Formulate training and technical assistance strategies and design activities that move the state toward its vision of national and community service
2. Develop and communicate a statewide vision of service and foster an ethic of service and volunteering throughout the state
 - Provide leadership in developing a comprehensive three year State Service Plan which provides a vision for expanding service opportunities, and a strategy for achieving that vision
 - Bring new partners to the table and leverage additional resources to expand service opportunities across the state.
 - Incorporate all components of AmeriCorps, including AmeriCorps*NCCC and AmeriCorps*VISTA, Learn and Serve America, Senior Corps and the larger volunteer community

CALIFORNIAVOLUNTEERS²

The National and Community Service Trust Act requires the governor of each state to create and appoint a commission through which the national service programs will be administered. In California, Governor Pete Wilson created the state's first commission – known as the Commission on Improving Life Through Service (CILTS) – through Executive Order W-77-94 in 1994. In 2001, Governor Gray Davis renamed CILTS (Executive Order D-51-02) as the Governor's Office On Service and Volunteerism (GO SERV). Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger renamed the commission the California Service Corps through Executive Order S-14-04 in August 2004. In December 2006, Governor Schwarzenegger recast the California Service Corps as CaliforniaVolunteers – Office of the Governor (Executive Order S-24-06).

First Lady Maria Shriver serves as the Honorary Chairperson of CaliforniaVolunteers.

The purpose of CaliforniaVolunteers is to increase the number of Californians serving and volunteering while we both build our profile as an innovation leader on the state and local level and increase investment and interest in service and volunteerism. CaliforniaVolunteers is organized into five departments.

The *Executive Department* manages activities of the 25-member Commission and the four CaliforniaVolunteers departments: Communications and Outreach, Disaster and Emergency Management, Finance and Administration, and AmeriCorps Programs.

The *Communications and Outreach Department* develops funding, partnerships, communication strategies, and initiatives necessary to increase service and volunteering in California.

The *Disaster and Emergency Management Department* harnesses the power of organizations and individuals through training and volunteer service to make communities safer and better prepared to respond to emergencies

The *Finance and Administration Department* ensures that all resources entrusted to the organization and our sub-grantees are utilized and managed appropriately.

The *AmeriCorps Programs Department* grows, diversifies, and builds upon the quality of AmeriCorps and other programs in California.

The *AmeriCorps Programs Department* is responsible for providing programs with training and ongoing support, monitoring and overseeing programs, and allocating AmeriCorps formula and competitive funds through a competitive grantmaking process. The department is staffed by a Director of AmeriCorps Programs, Manager of Program Operations, Manager

² From *CaliforniaVolunteers Administrative Manual*
California AmeriCorps Resource Manual
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of Training and Technical Assistance, Manager of Grants and Field Outreach, four Program Associates and one Logistics Associate.

The *Director of AmeriCorps Programs* provides overall guidance and leadership to the department. (S)he is a member of CaliforniaVolunteers' senior staff and is the department's primary liaison to both internal (e.g., executive director, chief financial officer, etc.) and external (e.g., Program Committee commissioners, California AmeriCorps Alliance) constituencies.

The *Manager of Program Operations* is responsible for program monitoring and oversight. (S)he is the primary contact for the CNCS program officer assigned to CaliforniaVolunteers. The Manager of Program Operations supervises all Program Associates.

The *Manager of Training and Technical Assistance* is responsible for the commission's AmeriCorps training and technical assistance (T/TA), including the annual AmeriCorps training conference, regional training events, program-specific training sessions, etc. This T/TA may be provided directly by commission staff or outside organizations under contract to CNCS and/or CaliforniaVolunteers. The Manager of Training and Technical Assistance is also responsible for reviewing, approving, and providing training on program performance measures. (S)he is the primary contact for CNCS training staff. The Manager of Training and Technical Assistance supervises the Logistics Associate.

The *Manager of Grants and Field Outreach* is responsible for coordinating the commission's grantmaking process (including outreach and provision of T/TA to grant applicants), managing the grant awards over the three-year period, and responding to ongoing inquiries from organizations that are interested in AmeriCorps funding.

Program Associates are CaliforniaVolunteers' primary points of contact with its AmeriCorps programs. They are responsible for maintaining regular communication with grantees, in addition to providing ongoing monitoring and oversight.

The *Logistics Associate* is responsible for coordinating all logistics (travel, hotel, venues, food and beverage, etc.) associated with the department's conferences, trainings, and other events, including the annual training conference, peer reviews, grant interviews, etc.

Grant Administration – Life Cycle of a Grant

Overview of Formula and Competitive Process

The following provides an overview of AmeriCorps*States funding, CaliforniaVolunteers grantmaking process and the life cycle of a grant. CNCS allocates Subtitle C AmeriCorps*States funds through two mechanisms: formula allocations to state service commissions based upon the population of the state and, through a national competition whereby all state service commissions have the opportunity to submit applications representing their state. California receives approximately \$10 million dollars in formula funding and \$20 million from the national competition. Regardless of the type of funds available, all applications are submitted and reviewed by CaliforniaVolunteers. Formula funds are allocated in two of every three years through a large state and federal grantmaking process. During the “off-cycle” year when all formula dollars are committed to programs and only competitive funds are available, CaliforniaVolunteers does not conduct a large, statewide grantmaking process. Instead the commission may decide to focus on a specific issue area or priority and/or develop a Governor’s Initiative to submit to CNCS.

In general, grantees are funded on a three-year cycle, with the availability of funds in the second and third year being contingent upon a number of factors, including the availability of funds and slots, satisfactory progress in relation to the approved performance measures, compliance with federal and state regulations, submission of a continuation or renewal application outlining programmatic changes, a detailed budget for the applicable program year, and any other criteria established in the original award agreement. After each three year cycle, all grantees seeking to continue must reapply (re-compete) as a new program.

eGrants, CNCS’ response to the President’s eGovernment initiative, is an online tool designed to automate the entire grants management process from application to close-out. Specifically, the system was built to reduce paperwork, allow applicants to track the progress of their proposals, improve productivity at CNCS, put all CNCS systems into one database, and meet statutory requirements that the public be able to do business with the federal government electronically. This internet-based system allows potential applicants to learn about grant opportunities and apply for, manage, and report on their grants. The system also allows CNCS to review applications, award grants, and manage grants throughout the life of the grant. For more information, please visit the eGrants website: <http://cns.gov/egrants/index.asp>.

Education Award Program Funds

Education Award Program (EAP) grants provide organizations with education awards for individuals enrolled as AmeriCorps members that complete a set number of hours over the course of a program year. Nominal operating funds are available, not to exceed \$600 per

full-time equivalent member, to offset program management and operating expenses. There are no matching fund requirements for EAP grants. Organizations seeking EAP grants must support the program and members through sources other than AmeriCorps funding (including costs for living allowances and other member benefits; member training, supervision, and recruitment; staff to operate and oversee the program; supplies and equipment for service activities; travel expenses; and evaluation).

EAP grants have streamlined program management and reporting requirements. State Service Commissions can select Education Award Program grantees through their state grant process to compete nationally for Education Award Program funding, can select Education Award Program grantees through their state grant process to fund using formula funds, or can apply for an Education Award Program block grant from CNCS and then designate programs that will be funded.

Negotiation and Award

The Corporation conducts an annual Grant Application Review Process (GARP) for applications for competitive funding. GARP includes both an external peer review and an internal staff review to determine which applications will receive funding. Upon approval, CNCS program and fiscal officers work with CaliforniaVolunteers and program representatives to finalize program designs and budgets. Upon final approval, applications are finalized in eGrants. CNCS issues a grant award to CaliforniaVolunteers which allows the commission to enter into a contract with grantees. The grant award provides spending authority and the issue date dictates member enrollment dates. **Please note: Programs may not incur costs or enroll members without written approval from CaliforniaVolunteers.**

State Contracting Process—see CV Fiscal Manual for more details

The AmeriCorps grant award is governed by a contract between CaliforniaVolunteers and the grant recipient, or subgrantee. Subgrantees must conform to the terms of the contractual agreement or risk withholding or disallowance of payments, the reduction or termination of the grant award, and/ or the denial of future grant awards.

Subgrantees must comply with all applicable federal/state laws and regulations.

CaliforniaVolunteers may withhold grant funds and/or disallow expenditures when a program fails to comply with any term or condition of the grant award or federal regulations.

This may include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Failure to submit the required reimbursement claims in a timely manner;
- Failure to submit the required progress and financial reports in a timely manner;
- Failure to resolve interim or final audit exceptions on past or current grants in a timely manner;
- Inadequate maintenance of accounting records;
- Failure to submit proof of liability coverage prior to contracting;
- Failure to cooperate with or admit CaliforniaVolunteers staff or representatives (e.g., audit team) to review program and/or fiscal records.

CaliforniaVolunteers may reduce or terminate grant funds for reasons that may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Failure by the subgrantee to comply with any term or condition of the grant award;
- Reduction or elimination of federal funds appropriated for the purposes of the grant award by the United States government during the term of the grant award.

Programs that have been previously funded by CaliforniaVolunteers will be reviewed for past compliance, including financial management, financial reports, progress and annual reports, monitoring results, audit reports, and any other relevant documentation or information. Failure to comply with any term or condition of a grant award may result in the denial of future grant awards.

CaliforniaVolunteers funds must be used to supplement existing funds for program activities and not to replace those funds which have been appropriated for the same purpose. Supplanting is strictly prohibited for all CaliforniaVolunteers funds.

The grant award/contract entered into with CaliforniaVolunteers is subject to any applicable restrictions, limitations, or conditions enacted by the California Legislature and/or the United States government subsequent to execution of the grant award.

It is the policy of the federal government to conduct business only with responsible persons. A system for debarment and suspension from programs and activities involving federal financial and non-financial assistance and benefits assists agencies in carrying out this policy. Debarment or suspension of a participant by one agency has a government-wide effect.

Applicants must certify that they will adhere to the guidelines and standards included in federal Executive Order 12549, Debarment and Suspension. By authorizing the Certification and Assurance of Compliance forms, which are integrated into the AmeriCorps Application for Federal Funds, in eGrants, the Corporation's electronic Grants Management System, the applicant certifies to that effect.

CaliforniaVolunteers begins the contracting process as soon as the Corporation announces funding decisions and earlier for continuation programs. This process begins with CaliforniaVolunteers advising subgrantees of the documentation needed to finalize a contract. For the 2007-08 program year, the following programmatic and financial documentation is required to enter into a contract.

Programmatic Documentation:

- From eGrants, the SF 424, Application for Federal Funds Title Page;
- From eGrants, the finalized Program Narrative;
- Performance Measurement Worksheets covering all AmeriCorps member hours;
- CLASP forms (California Local Area Service Partnership) submitted via the internet;
- Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) with all partners who have made cash commitments to the program or who are supporting unstipended members;
- WBRS (Web-Based Reporting System) Access Request Form;
- Program Directory Information, submitted via the internet;
- Program Start Date (the date the first AmeriCorps member is enrolled);
- Program End Date (12 months after the Start Date); and
- Last Date to Enroll each of the various slots: Full time, Half Time, and - if a subgrantee has an afterschool program and/or recruits college students - Reduced Half Time, Quarter Time and Minimum Time AmeriCorps members. The subgrantee must estimate the last date the program could accommodate enrollments of new members in each slot applicable to the program.

Financial Documentation:

- From eGrants, the finalized Budget Form;
- From eGrants, the finalized Budget Narrative;
- Financial Management Survey (see Fiscal Manual), including submission of the most recent A-133 audit, if applicable;
- *Payee Data Record Form (included in this manual as Attachment 15), required for all subgrantees despite the form's exclusion for federal, state, and local governments, and school districts. Submission of this form ensures that the subgrantee's reimbursement check is sent to the correct address;
- Address List (Roster) for Board of Directors, if a non-profit organization;
- Evidence of 501 (c) 3 status, if a non-profit organization;
- Council or Board Resolution or certified meeting minutes accepting fiduciary responsibility for the grant award, if a non-profit organization or local government agency. A sample resolution is included in this manual as Attachment 18; and
- Evidence of Liability Insurance coverage or Self-Insurance Statement.

CaliforniaVolunteers Program Staff need eight business days to review and edit completed contract materials submitted by subgrantees and seven business days to generate contracts from the contract materials and to approve contracts. Submission of inaccurate or incomplete contract materials adds time-consuming corrective steps and transmittals.

Two unexecuted contracts are sent to subgrantees for signature and must be returned to CaliforniaVolunteers. A fully executed contract is returned to the subgrantee when all parties have signed the document and the CNCS grant award is authorized in eGrants.

Grant Modifications

Over the course of a program year, changes to programs could be required which may require revisions to the contract or binding agreement, such as partnership changes, budget revisions (especially reductions), revisions of performance measures, etc. First, it will be necessary to determine if the change is significant enough to require a grant amendment. State Service Commissions may make program design and budget changes without CNCS approval for formula programs, but will need approval for changes to competitive programs.

Changes in the grant that do not involve the budget

You must obtain written approval for significant program changes to your grant. Examples of program changes that require prior written approval include:

- ★ changes in the scope or goals of the program;
- ★ changes in the start and end dates of a grant;
- ★ increasing the number of members beyond the maximum allotted member service years (MSY); and
- ★ decisions to sub-grant or sub-contract out AmeriCorps activities not previously contemplated or approved.

Unused funds budgeted for living allowances and benefits

Budget line items included under “Member Support Costs” are directly related to the number of members that you agreed to enroll and include living allowances, FICA, workers’ compensation, and health care.. If you fail to meet the program’s enrollment target or if members drop out, you cannot use these funds to pay for other costs. See CV Cost Per Member Policy.

Other budget changes

Examples of budgetary and organizational changes that require the prior approval of the Corporation:

- ★ Significant reductions in the match commitment.
- ★ Purchases of equipment over \$5,000 unless specified in the grant award budget.
- ★ The transfer of the grant or sub-grant to a different organization.

Program Closeout

The majority of local assistance grants administered by CaliforniaVolunteers are for a term of three years, with many subgrantees successfully recompeting for additional three-year grant terms. However, the closeout process should be completed every year for each grant in order to evaluate program management and ensure compliance with all requirements.

Subgrantee (program) closeout process includes two distinct procedures: one confirms completion of all *programmatic* requirements and the other confirms completion of all *fiscal* requirements. These two procedures are interrelated, as the successful completion of all programmatic requirements is needed before final reimbursement is made.

The fiscal close-out procedure is very straightforward: a program submits its final invoices within 60 days of the grant termination date and submits, in WBRS, its final FSR within 90 days of the grant termination date.

The program director (grantee) is responsible for ensuring completion of all programmatic requirements. This includes ensuring that a program has successfully completed all the member service documentation and all the progress reports in the WBRS system. CaliforniaVolunteers will not release the final payment on a grant in its final year until the program associate assigned to the program confirms that the programmatic close-out is complete. See Chapter 2 for procedure.

Retention of Grant Records

In general, you must keep all records for a period of three years or more from the date of submission of the appropriate final financial status report for the period—this could cover a period of 7-years, from the first year start date, three years of programming followed by three years of record retention. If an audit is started prior to the expiration of the three-year period, the records must be retained until the audit findings involving the records have been resolved and final action taken. More details are available in 45 CFR § 2541.420.

Chapter 2

California Volunteers

Operating Policies and Procedures

California Operating Policies and Processes Working with Program Associates

CaliforniaVolunteers Program Associates represent the primary CV staff contact for AmeriCorps programs. Program Associates provide oversight through risk-management systems that assess the effectiveness of each funded CV AmeriCorps program. This section provides an overview of the CV AmeriCorps operating policies and processes crucial to the operation of CV AmeriCorps programs. Policies and processes discussed include: Contracting, the CNCS Web Based Reporting System, Desk Monitoring, Site Visits, Monthly Enrollment/Retention Rates, APR/Quarterly Reports, Cost Per Member Service Year Policy, Training and Technical Assistance, Continuation Funding, Program Year – Close Out Process, and CV On-Going Communication Expectations.

Contracting

The Contracting Process consists of finalizing program design and performance measures in order to create a legally binding agreement between the program's Legal Applicant and CaliforniaVolunteers. CV provides a contract checklist outlining all required documents for contracting to all programs. The Checklist ensures that each program has submitted all components required for contracting.

The items listed on the Contract Checklist (see Grantee Central) include: Title Page, Signed Certifications and Assurances Page, CLASP Forms (Partners), Finalized Program Narrative, Finalized Performance Measures, Program Sub-site Information, WBRS Access Request Form, Program Directory Information Form, and MOUs with partners providing local assistance for unstipended members and/or promised match resources. The Program Associate also ensures that the Finalized Budget Form, Budget Narrative, Financial Self Assessment, and Payee Data Form, are included. If applicable, programs must also submit proof of non-profit status from the IRS, a roster of the Board of Directors, and a Board resolution or minutes showing acceptance of the grant by the Board of the legal applicant.

The Contract Checklist also includes the WBRS User Access Request Form, Member Placement Sites, and Partner MOUs. Although these documents do not become an exhibit in the executed contract, they are required for the contracting process.

In addition to submitting all documents on the Checklist, programs are required to submit their Performance Measurement Worksheets (PMW) to their Program Associate for review. The PMW review process includes the Program Associate, the Manager of Training and Technical Assistance, and the main program contact. In order to complete contracting in a timely manner, it is a best practice for programs to begin this process while assembling their contract documents.

In general, CV has the following performance requirements. For more detailed information regarding performance measure, please refer to Chapter 4.

General Requirements

- Programs must develop at least one performance measure in each of the program design categories: Needs and Service Activities, Member Development, and Strengthening Communities.
- Submit performance measures that are achievable at their target levels within a twelve month period;
- Revise performance measures in consultation with CV staff prior to submission to the Corporation;
- Participate in negotiating performance measures prior to contracting;
- Develop a system for collecting and organizing this performance data on an ongoing basis;
- Include the results in progress and final reports (on a yearly basis); and,
- Utilize data to continuously improve program operations.

Needs and Service Activities

- Programs must develop a set of performance measures that account for member's direct service activities.
- Programs must develop an aligned performance measure (output, intermediate outcome and end outcome) on their primary service activity. Primary service activity is defined as the member service activity for which the greatest number of member service hours (cumulative across the program) are dedicated. The outcome measure must detail a compelling impact on the identified community need.
- Performance measures for activities other than the primary service activity must include an output and outcome measure. Outcomes for these activities should detail an impact on the identified community need.

Member Development

- Programs must develop an output and outcome measure related to training provided to members in completing their term of service. For example, 20 members completed the member training plan (initial orientation and training, site-specific training, ongoing training, and Life After AmeriCorps training).
- Programs are encouraged to develop additional outcomes related to member development, including measures of member mastery of training content based on pre and post evaluations, or measures of the percentage of members who enter specific education programs (such as teacher certification programs) or career paths (public or non-profit careers) following the completion of the term of service.

Strengthening Communities

- Programs that propose direct service programs must have a volunteer recruitment performance measure. CV has developed a standardized volunteer recruitment performance measure that tracks the total number of volunteers that members have directly recruited for service and the number of volunteer hours served. Programs that engage members solely in volunteer recruitment must adopt this performance measure. Programs engaged in both volunteer recruitment and support must adopt the standardized performance measure and track the number of volunteer hours provided by community volunteers.
- Programs proposing that members engage in capacity building activities beyond the volunteer recruitment requirement must develop a performance measure that includes an output and outcome for each activity. For example, a program who engages members in fundraising activities must develop an output of grant applications submitted and prepared by the AmeriCorps member, and an outcome, such as funding secured. Applicants are reminded that individual AmeriCorps members may not spend more than 10 percent of their term of service engaged in capacity building.

Minimum performance measure requirements are summarized in the following table:

	Output	Outcome
Needs and Service Activities	Primary Service Activity	Primary Service Activity (direct impact on community need)
	Other Service Activities	Other Service Activities
Member Development	Member Training Plan	Direct Impact on Member
Strengthening Communities	Volunteer Recruitment	
	Capacity Building Activities (if applicable)	Capacity Building Activities (if applicable)

Upon receipt of all the required contract documents and completion of the PMW review process, the Program Associates pass contracts to the Fiscal and Administration department for processing. The Grants Management Associates in the Fiscal and Administration department work with each program's Legal Applicant to finalize and execute the contract.

CNCS Web Based Reporting System (WBRS)

“WBRS uses a secure database on a web server for the transacting of information among AmeriCorps sites, programs, State Commissions, Parent Organizations and the Corporation for National and Community Service. The forms in WBRS were designed to look like the paper forms previously used. Worksheets for building these forms are also part of the WBRS system. These worksheets are based on State Commission experiences and are designed to minimize common reporting problems. The system is designed to streamline reporting to the Corporation. “Excerpt from WBRS Help Manual”

CaliforniaVolunteers utilizes the Web Based Reporting System (WBRS) to access and assess data on program activity related to: member enrollment/exit status, and fiscal and programmatic reports. WBRS also serves as a mechanism for providing AmeriCorps programs with training and technical assistance. AmeriCorps programs use WBRS to track member data, and report programmatic progress and fiscal status.

Key WBRS Information Includes:

- a. Grantee Information Profile (GIP): The master document in WBRS that represents a program's grant. All member forms, reports and APR documents must be associated with a particular GIP.
- b. Member Start/End dates: Date a member begins service/Date of exit for a member's term of service
- c. Program Member Enrollment Periods and Budget Periods: Program member enrollment periods and budget periods are uploaded from eGrants awards to establish start and end program parameters for member enrollment and budget expenditures.
- d. WBRS User Access Roles: State Commissions create user profiles for Program and Operating Site Staff, who in turn enter member documents and other forms into WBRS. While only State Commissions can edit user access rights, each WBRS user can edit the contact information in his/her own user profile. User access information is the primary security feature of WBRS. Only State Commissions have access to edit user access roles.
- e. AmeriCorps Progress Report (APR) – This is the module/area of WBRS for reporting on performance measurement and includes the Performance Measurement Worksheet, the Progress Report, the Grantee Progress Report and other forms
- f. Financial Status Report (FSR) – Defined as the financial report that aggregates expense report data

Desk Reviews

CV program staff administers AmeriCorps programs under a monitoring system which ensures compliance with federal and state regulations, state contracts, and further assists programs in identifying and addressing areas of concern.

Within 60 days of a program's start date, each program is required to submit hard copies of the following to their Program Associate. Key Desk Review items fall under the following categories: (See Grantee Central for Desk Review checklist)

1. Member Recruitment, Selection, Placement
2. Member File Checklist
3. Member Contract
4. Member Guide/Handbook
5. Member Position Description
6. Member Orientation
7. Member Training
8. Member Support
9. Member Timesheet
10. Site Supervisor Handbook
11. Performance Measurement Instruments
12. Organizational Capacity
13. Member File Check (A sampling of actual member files)

Program Associates review these documents against the CaliforniaVolunteers Program Standards in order to determine whether the program needs to make any changes. Program Associates communicate required changes and/or compliance issues/concerns to the programs through email. If necessary, programs submit revised documents to their Program Associate for additional review. As a part of the monitoring process, Desk Reviews may also inform the PA of a program's training and technical assistance needs.

AmeriCorps Progress Report (APR)

Progress reports inform programs and CaliforniaVolunteers of progress toward meeting performance measures. In order to create a progress report in WBRS, programs must first enter and finalize their Performance Measurement Worksheets (PMWs) in the APR module. Programs can create their PMWs from scratch or can inherit them from the eGrants system. Whatever method is used, it is crucial (and required) that these PMWs match the PMWs in program's executed CV contract. Once the PMWs are entered in WBRS along with appropriate Performance Measure Plans, the Program Associate will approve them, enabling the program to begin creating the progress report. (Additional set up for reporting includes selecting output codes. Refer to the Help Manual in WBRS for more information).

Programs are required to submit reports quarterly. Each report covers up to a three month period, and are due 15 days after the end of the reporting period. The reporting periods – according to the calendar year – are as follows:

<u>Reporting Period</u>	<u>Due Date</u>
January 1 – March 31	April 15
April 1 – June 30	July 15
July 1 – September 30	October 15
October 1 – December 31	January 15

Programs must submit a report for every quarter of operation. The first report submitted is determined by the program start date. For example, a program starting August 1 will submit the first report on October 15 (August 1 falls within the July 1 – September 30 reporting period). The last report of the program year must be identified as the “final report” in WBRS. Programs ending between quarters should submit the final report 10 business days after the program end date. (For more information regarding final reports, refer to the WBRS Help Manual.)

Progress reporting should follow the stages of Initial Review, Implementation Review, and Results Review. Generally, the Initial Review occurs during the first quarter of the programmatic year (which may or may not align with the calendar year), the Implementation Review occurs during the second and third quarters, and the Results Review occurs during the fourth quarter. Guidelines for reporting according to the stages are outlined below.

First Quarter Initial Review: A progress report that addresses if components are in place as anticipated/designed for each PMW. Review progress on what needed to be in place for the program design to work.

Second Quarter Implementation Review: A progress report that addresses if components are functioning as anticipated/designed for each PMW. Review progress on each PMW to confirm activities and processes are being implemented as designed.

Third Quarter Implementation Review: A progress report that addresses results progress (outputs and outcomes). Review progress on each PMW to confirm activities and processes are implemented as designed. At this point in the program, there should be some evidence of outcomes.

Fourth Quarter Results Review: A progress report that addresses final result (outputs and outcomes) of each PMW and the overall program. At this point in the program there should be final outcome data analysis.

For additional information on the review process reporting progress, see Chapter 4 (of this resource manual), Standard Five – Program Design is Effective.

After each progress report is submitted, Program Associates will review the reports and provide feedback for each of their programs. Each quarter, the feedback process begins with documenting the date that the report is submitted, and is as follows:

1. Programs submit APR, PA documents date of submittal, noting any special circumstances.
2. PA reviews APRs according to standard criteria (contracted PMWs and APR Feedback Form) and deliver feedback to programs within 30 days after the report is submitted.
 - a) PA sends feedback via email and discusses feedback, as necessary, with each program.
 - b) Program confirms receipt of feedback and confirms in writing (via email) how they will incorporate feedback into next report.
 - c) PA verifies any changes made to report as applicable.
 - d) PA documents feedback process and communication in program file and CaliforniaVolunteers monitoring systems.

Site Visits

As part of the monitoring and risk assessment processes, CaliforniaVolunteers conducts site visits with each of its AmeriCorps programs. The purpose of a site visit is to meet with program staff and partners, assess the program's management and operational systems, meet with members (and if possible, observe members providing service), review member files, fiscal systems and monitor compliance with CaliforniaVolunteers and CNCS policies. Site visits are conducted and documented with the Site Visit Assessment and Summary Instrument (see Grantee Central).

CaliforniaVolunteers Program Associates will visit all programs at least twice during operation – once in the first year of the first cycle, and once after the program has entered its second cycle (and beyond). A first year/first cycle visit aims not only to assess program compliance with CV and CNCS policies, but also allows Program Associates to meet directly with new program staff in order to provide on site training and technical assistance, and coaching. First year/first cycle visits also serve to verify that the program has a solid foundation from which to operate and manage the AmeriCorps program. Additional site visits may be required should risk indicators identify concerns. Risk factors include low member enrollment, inadequate staff capacity, insufficient performance reporting, fiscal concerns and challenges with sites or partnership.

A site visit with a veteran program allows Program Associates an opportunity to assess risk indicators and program management in person. Like the first year/first cycle visits, veteran program site visits may also provide the opportunity for Program Associates to deliver on site T/TA and coaching. All site visits are conducted in alignment with the CaliforniaVolunteers Program Standards.

Site visits are scheduled according to both the Program Associate's and the program staff's (and partners) availability. Program Associates run each site visit according to a common Site Visit Assessment instrument. The instrument guides discussion in the areas of Organizational Capability, Member Recruitment and Support, Strengthening Communities, and Continuous Improvement and Evaluation. Member files are reviewed and documented by a Member File Checklist and member rosters/hours reporting printouts from the WBRs account. The Program Associate will review 10% or 5 member files randomly selected to verify documentation and accurate tracking of member eligibility, service hours, performance reviews and other federal requirements. While on site, Program Associates also review financial management systems to verify that the program has established and maintain internal controls designed to reasonably ensure compliance with Federal laws, regulations, and program compliance requirements.

After the site visit, Program Associates complete a site visit report that addresses the challenges/concerns and strengths identified during the visit. Programs have the opportunity to review the report before it is finalized and filed. Once final, a signed copy of the report is sent to the program. The original signed report is kept on file at CaliforniaVolunteers. Any compliance concerns or areas that demand immediate attention are identified. A corrective action plan, with a timeline, is developed; completion of the corrective action is documented. If the program is unresponsive, unwilling or unable to take corrective action to address compliance concerns or there is a breach of the AmeriCorps contract, the Commission will take the necessary steps to rescind funding or take stewardship of the program.

Monthly Enrollment/Retention Rates

Member enrollment and retention directly relates to a program's ability to provide the service and intervention outlined in the performance measures. Member enrollment and retention can also serve as an indicator of program management and a quality member experience. As part of the monitoring process, CaliforniaVolunteers checks all programs' enrollment and retention rates for compliance with the CNCS and CV 90% enrollment and 10% attrition (90% retention) policy. Additionally, CNCS and CV require that all members are enrolled and exited (in WBRs) within 30 days of their start and end dates, respectively. As a result of these policies, enrollment and retention rates have a direct bearing on funding decisions made at both the state and national levels.

In an effort to improve upon CV AmeriCorps program enrollment and retention rates, and to achieve compliance with the 30-day enrollment and exit policy, CV requires that programs track their member enrollment and retention rates, and 30 day compliance each month. To do so, programs may use the Enrollment and Retention Tracking Log (see appendix).

Monthly Enrollment/Retention Reporting

The Enrollment and Retention Tracking Log helps programs to track and report on their monthly member enrollment and retention status for the following:

- Number of members enrolled within 30 days
- Enrollment Percentage Rate
- Retention Percentage Rate
- Number of members exited within 30 days

Updated Logs are due to the program's Program Associate by the 5th of each month. In completing the Log, programs can (as applicable) reference internal member data and/or member data available in WBRs.

Cost Per Member Service Year (CPMSY) Policy

For information on the CaliforniaVolunteers Cost Per Member Service Year (CPMSY) Policy, refer to the 2007 AmeriCorps Fiscal Manual and/or Exhibit H of the program's CaliforniaVolunteers contract.

Program Associates will work with each program after the (program's) last day to enroll members in order to determine whether the CPMSY policy must be applied. The last day to enroll members is determined by the program according to the design and slot configuration. This date is included in the program's contract with CaliforniaVolunteers. Programs and Program Associates will regularly communicate to determine the program's enrollment status on the last day to enroll. Once it has been determined that the program has passed the last day to enroll and/or does not have plans for additional recruitment and enrollment, the Program Associate will conduct slot utilization analysis to determine the need for the CPMSY policy.

Each year, Program Associates will conduct slot utilization analysis when programs pass the last day to enroll members and at the end of the program year. The process for completing the slot utilization analysis includes data from WBRs and calculations from the CaliforniaVolunteers database, and proceeds as follows:

A. After verifying current enrollment rates in WBRs, the PA carefully reviews and/or updates the "Program Design Information" page in the current year of the CV AmeriCorps database to make sure that original slot information and last days to enroll records are

accurate. If a program has had a slot conversion, the PA reviews and/or updates the converted slot information to make sure that the data is current and accurate.

B. The PA analyzes the program's slot utilization based on the following member data gathered from WBRs: GIP, Commitment Tracker, Member Roster, and Member Main View.

C. Starting with information from the Member Main View, the PA completes the following analysis:

1. Active Members: Determine the number of "active" members by slot type, taking care that "refilled" slots are not counted twice, and record for entry into the database.
2. Departed Members: Identify members who have been exited (with and without awards and or suspended), take the total number of hours served and record for entry into the database.
3. Pending Enrollments:
 - a. If a program has passed the last day to enroll members, pending enrollments are not part of the slot utilization analysis, meaning that any pending enrollments do not count towards the total number of slots utilized.
 - b. If a program has *not* passed the last day to enroll, has plans to fill unutilized slots, or has valid member commitments (in the Commitment Tracker), the PA will count those slots in the total number of slots utilized.

D. Once steps A-C have been completed, the PA checks the information that he/she has gathered for accuracy (e.g. number of "active" members, number of members exited, etc.) by making sure that all slots awarded have been accounted for.

E. In order to run the CPMSY policy calculation, the PA enters the slot utilization data (gathered from steps A-D) into the CaliforniaVolunteers database. The calculation will determine the percentage of slots utilized out of the total number of slots awarded.

F. The CPMSY policy will go into effect should the calculation produce a variance (between the number of slots award and the percent utilized) of 20% or more. The policy outlines the required action plans for a variance of 20-30%, 30-50%, and 50% or greater. Please refer to the CPMSY policy for more information.

G. Should the CPMSY policy require a budget reduction, the Program Associate and a Grants Management Associate will conduct a conference call with program representatives to review the required reduction per budget category, provide guidance in determining line items to absorb the cuts and clarify any questions. This conversation is documented in writing with instructions on creating budget revisions.

H. To document that the CPMSY analysis process has been completed for a given program hard copies of the completed CPM and Design forms, Member Main View, Member Roster,

GIP, Commitment View, and any action plans and/or budget revisions are filed into the appropriate CV program file.

Training and Technical Assistance

Since 1998, CV has had the opportunity to offer funding opportunities annually. In an effort to support a new partnership in launching an AmeriCorps program and to bring new resources to veteran programs, CV offers technical assistance prior to contracting in one of two ways: hosting an annual AmeriCorps Conference and conducting a pre-contract site visit.

The AmeriCorps conference is an opportunity for all California AmeriCorps programs to gather, share experiences, build networks, learn and celebrate. The Conference generally occurs over the summer and designed to provide new and veteran grantees with an understanding of AmeriCorps regulations and provisions and the foundational pieces required for a quality program. Through technical assistance surveys to access the needs of all programs and an advisory group of representatives from the field, workshops are designed to address a variety of programmatic areas in order to develop operational systems that lead to successful program operation. Topics include but aren't limited to: overview of quality program elements; performance measurement and reporting; contracting and fiscal processes; member management; systems management; CaliforniaVolunteers Program Standards; and CaliforniaVolunteers and CNCS policy. CV staff and CNCS Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA) providers deliver workshops.

The timing of this training permits new programs/staff to become familiar with CaliforniaVolunteers policies, procedures, and requirements. Additionally, the Conference offers information on and access to a variety of resources tools to assist in the development of operational systems. The training delivered at the Conference also covers best practices, and provides a foundation for programs to build upon during the summer months in order to successfully launch a program.

The CV programs unit makes every effort to contact partnerships immediately upon funding notification to establish a relationship, become familiar with the proposal, the communities targeted, and schedule time to discuss the workload ahead. Recognizing the complexity of AmeriCorps programming, CV makes every effort to conduct a pre-program start site visit for brand new programs.

A pre-program site visit consists of the following components:

- Face-to-face time with program representatives: at a minimum the people responsible for program operations. When possible, a larger representation of the partnership including site supervisors is convened. This introduction between CV and program staff will lay the groundwork for the year ahead and will allow the Program Associate to assess strengths and potential challenges, (i.e., fiscal administration, ability to support members, communication structure within the partnership, etc.)

- A review of the written proposal: reviewing for clarification and CV feedback on any challenges with proposed design with reference to best practices.
- Review of the program timeline: information exchange on the contracting timeline, critical areas that need immediate attention, systems development and member recruitment process.
- Exchange of technical assistance materials: CV provides an AmeriCorps Resource Manual and best practices documents, introduces the CV website, discusses upcoming training opportunities, reviews the contracting checklist and other pertinent materials.
- Developing relationships: Review the role of CV and the Program Associate's responsibilities and those of the program management team.
- Overview of AmeriCorps reporting requirements: program calendar year, WBRS accounts, APRs and FSRs and related management information systems.
- An action plan: the Program Associate and program director work together to develop next steps towards contracting and program launch. At times the program proposal may need greater detail (if funded under an initiative, for example); the performance measures might need fine-tuning; budget revisions may be required; administrative systems may need further development, etc. At a minimum, the Program Associate establishes a schedule for monitoring progress, either by setting phone appointments or work product submission and feedback timelines.

Upon completion of either of these strategies, the AmeriCorps training conference, or site visits, the assigned Program Associate completes an initial program assessment which initiates the monitoring of the program. If a site visit was conducted, a site visit report is written capturing the action plan and other issues discussed and provided to the new grantee.

In addition to pre-launch T/TA, programs can access ongoing T/TA through on-line training modules (currently AmeriCorps 101, Fiscal Management and Disability Inclusion) and their Program Associate. As the program's main contact with CaliforniaVolunteers, the Program Associates serve as the gateway to additional resources. Programs are encouraged to regularly communicate with their Program Associate, sharing T/TA needs, ideas, services, etc. as necessary.

Continuation Funding

While AmeriCorps funding is typically allocated in (up to) three year commitments, programs are required to complete a continuation application after the first and second year of funding. CaliforniaVolunteers provides all programs with instructions for creating and completing a continuation application. The instructions ask programs to address the following in narrative form:

- Service Activities Performance (Needs and Service and Strengthening Communities PMWs)
- Organization Performance (Program staff, sites, and partners)
- Member Management (Enrollment/retention, member development and supervision)

The CaliforniaVolunteers Continuation Funding process serves as part of the monitoring process that ensures high quality programming through the state. During the Continuation Funding process, AmeriCorps Programs Department staff review materials and information from WBRS, program and Program Associate communication, progress report, and programs' continuation applications. The following areas are reviewed during the process:

- Continuation Application
- Program Operation and Management
 - Program Staff, Member Management, Fiscal Systems and Reporting
- CV Program Monitoring Systems:
 - Desk Review, Site Visits
- Member Enrollment and Retention (30-90-90-30)
- Progress Reports (and any associated data as applicable)
- Compliance with CV and CNCS policies

With the support of AmeriCorps Programs Department staff, Program Associates assess the aforementioned areas in order to determine a continuation recommendation. All continuation recommendations address the following areas:

- Service Activities Performance (progress reporting towards meeting performance measures)
- Organization Performance (staff structure, on-going communication, CV and CNCS compliance)
- Member Management (enrollment/retention, member development and supervision)
- Budget/Budget Narrative (cost per MSY, any increase complies with CV policy)

Expansion funding is rarely available, however, programs may experience a budget reduction. Budget reduction recommendations are based upon serious performance concerns such as slot utilization, high attrition, program management concerns or a program's inability to meet performance outcomes. Once agreed upon by all AmeriCorps Programs Department staff, Program Associates send the continuation recommendation to programs via email. The email memo explains the process used to complete CV's continuation recommendation and includes a copy of the continuation recommendation.

Program Year Closeout Process

The majority AmeriCorps grants administered by CaliforniaVolunteers are for a term up to three years. As part of the CV monitoring process, programs must complete the closeout process at the end of every year (for each contract).

The CV closeout process includes two distinct procedures: one confirms completion of all *programmatic* requirements and the other confirms completion of all *fiscal* requirements. The

successful completion of all programmatic requirements is needed before final reimbursement is made.

The Program Associate is responsible for ensuring completion of all programmatic requirements. This includes ensuring that a program has successfully completed all the member service documentation and progress reports WBRS. The fiscal unit will not release the final payment on a grant in its program year until the Program Associate confirms that the programmatic closeout is complete. It is the responsibility of the Program Associate assigned to the program to advise the fiscal assistant in writing of the successful conclusion and closeout of the program year.

Closeout Procedure

Programs will receive a Program Closeout Procedures Memo from their program Associate 30 days prior to the end of the program year. While all CV AmeriCorps contracts expire annually on December 31, programs are encouraged to complete the close-out process within 30-days of program end date and not delay the process until the contract expires. The memo explains the requirements of the programmatic closeout process and includes the Member File Closeout Certification form and the Program Closeout Checklist. The memo and attached checklists serve as documentation that the process has been completed.

The Program Closeout Procedures Memo outlines the process by identifying the following steps:

1. Verify accurate and complete entry of enrollment forms and time logs for each AmeriCorps member in WBRS.
2. Verify that Exit Forms have been entered into (and approved in) WBRS for all departing AmeriCorps members.
3. Run and print out a program member reconciliation report from WBRS. Verify that all members enrolled in WBRS have been exited with authorization for appropriate educational awards. Include the print out with the cover letter (step 6).
4. Review all member files and submit the Member Files Closeout Certification form assuring CV that all required member documentation is in the member files. Remember that each file should include all components listed on the CaliforniaVolunteers Member File Checklist. Include the Certification form with the cover letter (step 6).
5. Complete and submit (in WBRS) a progress report for the final period of the grant. Include a print out of the report that has been reviewed, signed, and dated by the Program Director with the cover letter (step 6).
6. Submit a cover letter indicating that tasks 1 through 5 have been completed. A description of where files will be stored and the procedures on how program documents can be retrieved by CV in the event of an audit must also be included.

Once a program has completed the programmatic process, the Grants Management Associates will conduct the fiscal closeout process. Programs will submit final invoices within 60 days of the grant termination date and will submit, in WBRS, its final FSR within 90 days of the grant termination date. In order for programs to receive final payment, the Grants Management Associates will work with the programs to complete the grant closeout. A final letter advising the program of a successful closeout of the grant will be sent from the CV Finance and Administration department.

CaliforniaVolunteers On-Going Communication Expectations

CaliforniaVolunteers Program Associates are the primary contact for all communications between CaliforniaVolunteers and AmeriCorps programs. The Program Associates need for mutual, on-going communication is outlined in the following assistance issues areas: Areas of Assistance, Contract Changes, and Member Issues.

A. Areas of Assistance

1. Communication is a two way process. Program Associates look to each program to:
 - a. Be responsive to Calls, E-Mails, Faxes
 - b. Inform CV of Changes in Staff Availability
2. Program Associates assist programs in identifying Training and Technical Assistance Needs associated with:
 - a. Program Design, PMW
 - b. WBRS, APR,
 - c. Data Collection, Reporting
 - d. Recruitment and Retention
 - e. Other (As determined by the Program and/or PA)

B. Contract Changes

1. Programs must inform their Program Associate of any Performance Measurement Worksheet Changes
 - a. Activities
 - b. Targeted Beneficiaries
 - c. Data Collection or Instruments
 - d. Sites or Partners
 - e. Targets
2. Programs must inform their Program Associate of any Organizational Changes:
 - a. Budget
 - b. Staffing or Staffing Patterns
 - c. Partners
 - d. Mission, Goals, Community Need

C. Member Issues:

1. Programs must inform their Program Associate of Member Changes including:

- a. Suspension, Reinstatement
 - b. Stipend
 - c. Member Exit, Termination, Retention
 - d. Disciplinary Action
- 2. Programs must inform their Program Associate of Member-related Organizational Issues including:
 - a. Slot Conversion and/or Term of Service
 - b. Last Day to Enroll Status--anticipated problems
 - c. Training and/or Recruitment Plan
 - d. Labor/Work Issues—Strike, Discipline

From the perspective of CV, on-going communication is best illustrated by the extent to which AmeriCorps program staff can assist in updating and otherwise keeping their Program Associate informed relative to the above assistance issues areas. When in doubt, notify the Program Associate of any member changes.

Chapter 3

Building a Strong Foundation

Strong Organization – Strong Collaborative

California AmeriCorps Program Standards

STANDARD ONE – Strong Organization—Strong Collaborative

Program management and administration impact an organization's and program's ability to effectively achieve goals and provide vital community services. Well administered AmeriCorps programs have a strong lead agency or committed partnership whom actively engage the community and resources to address a compelling community need. Qualified staff receive adequate support, provide operations management and have effective systems for monitoring compliance and effectively utilizing resources.

- 1) Partnering agencies have shared vision and mission of program design.
 - a) Governing structure is in place and includes roles and responsibilities for partnering agencies;
 - b) Key program partners meet regularly and utilize communication systems to coordinate, communicate key issues and implement the program;
 - c) Key program partners meet annually to discuss program progress, effectiveness and provide feedback for continuous improvement
- 2) Program has and utilizes systems to effectively involve and engage a wide range of community members in identification of, planning for, and addressing of local needs, and provides information regarding impact.
 - a) Involves broader community input in identifying needs to be addressed;
 - b) Involves broader community input in developing plans to address the need.
- 3) Program has management and administrative systems in place.
 - a) Program operating systems specific to AmeriCorps programs are integrated into all partners management systems;
 - b) Operating systems include:
 - (1) Administrative functions – time/hours record and performance reporting
 - (2) Information systems – data collection, analysis, reporting, evaluation
 - (3) Member management – documentation and oversight
 - (4) Communication and Marketing
 - (5) Continuity of Operations Plan
 - c) Staff with necessary skills to fulfill program tasks are selected and trained, including a minimum 1 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff person to cover grant responsibilities;
 - d) Staff training and development include AmeriCorps regulations, provisions, policies and issues of compliance.
- 4) Program maintains strong fiscal controls through the following systems:
 - a) Has written Policies and Procedures Manual in accordance with California Volunteers requirements;
 - b) Uses standard accounting practices. (Pr. V.B1);
 - c) Knows and implements sufficient internal controls. (Pr. V.B1);
 - d) Separates costs by year and budget line item. (Pr. V.B1);

- e) Maintains supporting documentation for all expenditures, providing a clear audit trail. (Pr. V.B1);
 - f) Provides and accounts for matching funds as agreed upon in budget;
 - g) Maintains supporting documentation for all Grantee-provided cash and in-kind expenses in the budget, including source documentation justifying the appropriate value of the contributions;
 - h) Maintains signed time and attendance records (including distribution of time) for each employee whose salary/wage is included in the approved budget;
 - i) Maintains service hour records for members that differentiate between direct and indirect service hours AND records are all signed by the member and the supervisor (Pr. IV.C2);
 - j) Member Living Allowance payments are within the allowable ranges and the CNCS share does not exceed the CNCS maximum amount per slot type;
 - k) Health care made available to all eligible members serving full-time (Pr. IV.14)
 - l) Child care available to all eligible members (Pr. IV.15);
 - m) Maintains written contracts with all consultants/subcontractors;
 - n) Stays within the daily maximum rate of \$540/day for all consultants;
 - o) Maintains fully executed Memoranda of Understanding with all partners;
 - p) Demonstrates aspects of a strong Control Environment, per A-133, Part 6:
 - q) Fiscal staff have been to appropriate trainings and/or is aware of pertinent AmeriCorps rules, regulations, provisions, and procedures;
 - r) PERs (Periodic Expense Reports) and FSRs (Financial Status Reports) are generated in WBRS on time, show adequate match and are accurate..
- 5) Program looks to the future and has a financial strategy that moves it toward long-term sustainability.
- a) Sustainability plan incorporates transition from AmeriCorps to non-AmeriCorps service delivery within the program design;
 - b) Program has a long-term funding strategy in place;
 - c) Program has identified key/strategic stakeholders to build a resource network.

Building a Strong Foundation Strong Organization – Strong Collaborative Organizational Structure

Service programs, by their very nature, must collaborate and form partnerships with a wide variety of organizations and individuals. We are seeking community-wide solutions to problems. Each successful partnership needs to have a structure and a style that reflect the diversity of needs, populations, and organizations in its community. Building successful partnerships requires high trust, cooperation, creativity, and – above all – time. Any number of problems can prevent or damage a partnership. Despite the challenges involved in developing and maintaining collaborations, they are worth the effort. Partnerships increase the impact of individual organizations, develop new leaders, build an ongoing resource base, and broaden the scope of programs.

Experts describe collaboration as a linkage exemplifying mutual problem-solving, decision-making and mutual respect. Vital elements include: mutual needs and interest; a commitment of time by all participants; energy outlay and generation; sharing of resources with expected outcomes worth each participants investment; communication; broad-based representation; group process; shared ownership and commitment; rewards for cooperation; and openness of partners.

Articulating the organizational structure of your program will help you communicate how each organization's staff member relates to the overall structure of your program. It can also set the tone for the program's governing structure, providing a foundation for partner roles and responsibilities. A strong AmeriCorps program will have committed partners that want to have a voice regarding program and member issues. Articulating what partners can do as part of your program will be important (e.g., scheduling administrative partner meetings; bringing partners together to discuss expectations, partner responsibilities, and program policies; determining governing structure, member training needs, and any allowable fundraising or advocacy activities). Explicit organizational structures become more critical for larger programs because of their complexity. While smaller programs are represented by a single agency, larger programs have members placed in multiple community agencies or sites and have several partners as part of the grant.

Community Involvement

Local involvement and input are vital to the development of high-quality service programs that build and sustain communities. Successful programs are those that use extensive, broad-based local input and representatives of key stakeholder groups to design, implement, and evaluate their projects. This includes consultation with:

- representatives from the communities the program serves;

- program members (or potential members); and,
- appropriate community agencies (secular and faith-based), businesses, foundations, local labor organizations representing employees of service sponsors, and local government

Administrative Systems and Policies

All programs are strongly encouraged to create an AmeriCorps administration manual which provides the written policies and procedures for your program. Having these in writing in advance of any problems will assist you in resolving issues that can arise during the program year. For example, if something alarming appears after running a routine background check on a prospective member, one can refer to the administrative manual to determine where your program stands on specific issues (e.g., past criminal offences). Administrative policies set up the context of the program design that will affect member contracts and the site supervisor handbook.

The following are the major systems and infrastructure needed to support your program. Administrative policies and procedures should be considered for each of the following areas:

- ★ Site management (e.g., selection criteria, roles, expectations, requirements)
- ★ Member management (e.g., criminal background checks, rules of conduct)
- ★ Personnel
- ★ Office management
- ★ Fiscal systems (e.g., payroll, travel reimbursement, invoice processing, cash flow, purchases)
- ★ Communication
- ★ Liability insurance
- ★ Grievance policy
- ★ Performance measurement and evaluation
- ★ Volunteer roles, recruitment, and management

Operating Systems

Partners should develop an infrastructure to support the program design. This infrastructure can be viewed as a series of operating systems, managed either through the lead agency or sharing responsibilities across the partnership. Operating systems include the following functions:

- **Administrative Functions**—AmeriCorps programs are required to keep meticulous record of member service hours and personnel time dedicated to the efforts of the program. Both federal cost and program match (cash and in-kind) have the same documentation requirements. Procedures should outline payroll practices, performance reporting, and responsibilities assuring proper oversight.
- **Information Systems** – Programs are required to capture the efforts of AmeriCorps member activities throughout the program year. Systems which document pre-service data, targeted beneficiaries, instruments/tools to track change, data collection, analysis, evaluation, reporting and continuous improvement should be developed among partners.
- **Member Management** – This system typically operates within the lead agency and is managed by staff supported by the AmeriCorps budget. Partners should have an active role in developing: performance measures to accurately describe member activities at all placement sites; a position description for each member position; criteria for member selection including the requirement for a criminal background check and a process to make a determination following the results, a management plan which trains, supports and provides oversight of members (contracts, training, disciplinary procedure, recruitment/selection process, evaluation, etc.).
- **Communication and Marketing** – Ongoing communication is essential to a successful program, both internal and external. In developing the governing structure, decisions should be made as to who needs to know what, and when and which mechanisms will be used to facilitate regular, clear communication. The partnership decides the look and feel of the AmeriCorps program from the program name to the uniform of the members. Partners should consider, up front, how to advertise opportunities, promote success, outreach to stakeholders, including mass media and elected officials. Establishing clear internal and external communication channels is important. The flow of information includes sites, members, the commission and the community at large. It is important that you know how to tell your story effectively to each audience.
- **Continuity of Operations Plan** – Programs should be prepared in the event of a disaster or emergency. All programs are required to create a COOP to ensure that there is minimum disruption to their program in the event of a major event. Partners should consider contingency plans for staff, members and service beneficiaries and train members to be ready to respond appropriately.

Staffing Plan

Staffing plans help programs articulate roles and responsibilities, job descriptions, staff training requirements, and supervision needs. Adequate staffing is critical to program success, therefore, at a minimum, one full-time program director must be budgeted. Administration of an AmeriCorps grant is complex and has significant administration and reporting requirements. Grant administration costs are limited to five percent of federal expenditures—four for the grantee, one percent remains with CV. Any staff person on the budget should have a job description and use functional timesheets. The success of the program is predicated on various levels of staffing. Types of staff could include:

- ★ Operational staff supported by the budget (e.g., program director, training coordinator, site supervisors)
- ★ In-kind expertise from host agency (e.g., site supervisors, administrative support, fiscal staff, trainers, consultants)

Fundraising Rules for Program Staff

While there are a wide range of activities you may undertake to create a sustainable future for your program, you should keep in mind that certain activities cannot be paid for out of federal grant funds. Before making plans, you should review the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) circular applicable to your organization that spells out the costs that may and may not be charged to your grant. For example, under the OMB circulars, you cannot charge to your grant the costs of “organized fundraising” or expenses incurred “solely to raise capital or obtain contributions.” Staff supported by AmeriCorps grant funds must comply with the OMB limitations while on AmeriCorps time, or not charge the time spent on these activities to the AmeriCorps grant. OMB circulars also require that you keep accurate records regarding time spent on these and your other activities to clearly convey the nature of the activities undertaken.

In general, AmeriCorps members cannot assist their organizations with major fundraising efforts. However, Corporation policy permits some limited activities related to fundraising by AmeriCorps members to the extent that such activities:

- ★ provide immediate and direct support to a specific and direct service activity;
- ★ fall within the program’s approved direct service objectives;
- ★ are not the primary activity of the program; and
- ★ do not involve significant amounts of time for any member.

Following are some examples that will help to clarify what you can do with federal grant funds, as well as what you cannot charge to your AmeriCorps grant. Also included are examples of what AmeriCorps members may do, as well as activities that are prohibited for members.

Program staff may:

- ★ Develop and print materials such as brochures and annual reports to be used for outreach to the general public, which includes potential board members, funders, and community partners.
- ★ Contact individuals and organizations that are potential partners who may assist your program in delivering services.
- ★ Ask your board of directors and other volunteers to raise funds on their own time.
- ★ Pay for a program evaluation to demonstrate the impact and effectiveness of your program.
- ★ Solicit community involvement with or in-kind support for your program—e.g., seek volunteers to help with a project and donations of building supplies for a construction project.
- ★ Coordinate community involvement in a day of service, serv-a-thon, and other direct service activities that may have a fundraising element.
- ★ Include members of the public (including funders and other community partners) on your general mailing list for newsletters or brochures and other general interest publications. (Publications paid for from AmeriCorps grant funds, including matching or other federal funds, should not contain solicitations of donations).
- ★ Include in your general-purpose newsletter a “wish list” of needed in-kind items.
- ★ Invite members of the public, including funders, to make a site visit to your program.
- ★ Ask for advice from individuals with expertise who may be business or foundation staff regarding matters such as program development, training, and evaluation.
- ★ Invite members of the public, including funders and other community partners, to attend graduation ceremonies and other special events.
- ★ Ask a local business to sponsor a recognition event for members or volunteers.

Program staff may not:

- ★ Charge time directly to your AmeriCorps grant for staff to prepare funding proposals.

- ★ Use AmeriCorps grant funds, including matching or other federal funds, to develop promotional materials solely targeted at prospective funders.
- ★ Use AmeriCorps grant funds, including matching or other federal funds, to engage in a direct mail campaign to raise funds.
- ★ Use AmeriCorps grant funds, including matching or other federal funds, to conduct capital campaigns or endowment drives.
- ★ Hire a development consultant and charge fees to your AmeriCorps grant.
- ★ Charge time spent by staff on fundraising to sources of AmeriCorps or other federal grant funds.

Member Management Systems

Developing member management systems early on is important because these systems are the backbone of your program. Member management systems are those developed policies, position descriptions, file systems, and uniforms regulations (e.g., prohibiting red), etc. These systems will need to be clear when recruiting members as they will want to know the hours, environment, and people they'll be connecting with.

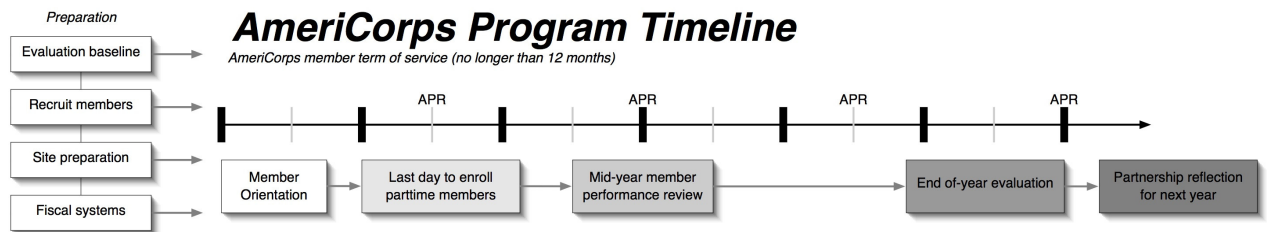
Master Calendar

Master calendars are crucial for planning and program success. Development of a program timeline can help you and your partners organize and communicate critical points in your program. Figure 1, below, is a generalized example of a program timeline. The following are just some of the things you might want to include:

- ★ Important dates for Members such as start and end dates, last day to enroll each type of member position
- ★ Trainings
- ★ Recruitment period
- ★ Due dates for program reports, fiscal reports, and any other communication to stakeholders
- ★ Service events and national days of service
- ★ Partner and community meetings
- ★ Community events

Figure 2: Program Timeline

This is an example of a timeline which is generalized for 12 months. You may want to complete with exact dates.



Common Events

Throughout the year, AmeriCorps members should have opportunities to come together across programs for special events as part of their service. This will remind them that they are part of a national network of programs, celebrate their accomplishments, and allow them to work with community volunteers, other AmeriCorps members and other National Service participants such as Learn and Serve America students and Senior Corps volunteers. Some events are designed to engage the broader community and leverage the work of volunteers. Annual events include:

- ★ Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service
- ★ Cesar Chavez Day of Service & Learning
- ★ All AmeriCorps Week
- ★ National Volunteer Week
- ★ National Youth Service Day
- ★ Make a Difference Day

For further information on these events, check the [CaliforniaVolunteers](#) website.

Celebrate Accomplishments

Find ways to share the wealth of accomplishments that occur throughout the year and recognize the talents of participants.

- ★ Use listserves and e-mail to distribute program highlights and success stories on a regular basis. This provides group motivation and promotes the "spirit of service."
- ★ Collect "Great Stories" expressing the qualitative value of the work members do in the community for your APR reports.
- ★ Hold recognition programs at the end of the year. Have sites report on their proudest achievements.

Performance Measurement

Minimally, CNCS requires all AmeriCorps programs to have at least one set of aligned performance measures (an output, intermediate outcome and end outcome) for their primary activity, in most cases a needs and services activity. AmeriCorps member activities and service hours are captured in three categories: Needs and Service (direct service and the majority of service hours), strengthening communities (standardized volunteer generation and management) and member development (training hours). Performance measurement is a way for you to track if you did what you said you were going to do and gauge the difference the activity made. Performance measurement results also provide you information necessary for decision-making, program branding and visibility, continuous improvement, and sustainability. Please refer to Chapter 3 – Standards 2 and 5.

Program Progress and Continuous Improvement

Your program is required to track your progress and report quarterly. Program reporting (the AmeriCorps Progress Report or APR) is done using the Web-Based Reporting System (WBRS) and includes member and programmatic progress including the results of member activities, as well as a description of continuous improvement activities planned and undertaken. Programs failing to meet expectation or performance targets will be required to create and submit a corrective action plan. (For more information, see Reg 2522.630)

AmeriCorps Gear and Affiliation Items

AmeriCorps members are encouraged but not required to wear official AmeriCorps service gear. Some type of identification is encouraged for purposes of local and national identity. In your AmeriCorps budget, you are allowed to allocate from \$35 to \$70 per member for official AmeriCorps service gear. (Additional safety apparel that is necessary for members to perform their daily service can be included in the budget to cover up to \$150 per member.)

The Corporation has contracted with Mississippi Industries for the Blind (MIB) for the warehousing and distribution of Service gear and national affiliation items. MIB will accept orders directly from programs and will ship from a central location. The program directly pays the supplier. Items can now be ordered online at www.nationalservicecatalog.org.

Because your program is unique, you will want to consider reflecting your program's unique identity through your required member uniform. Minimally, programs must utilize the AmeriCorps logo in the member uniform. Programs are encouraged to provide members with the grey sweatshirt, especially for national service days.

Programs may develop a unique look that is appropriate for settings in which members are completing their service. For example, members stationed in medical settings may need a lab coat with a pin. Programs may also create a unique logo for their program. It is also important that you provide the member with sufficient shirts to get them through their term of service.

Uniform costs are an allowable direct cost to your budget only if purchased from MIB. If you select to use another vendor note that you must buy the patches from Mississippi and sew them on to the shirt you buy.

Each AmeriCorps member could be provided a core package consisting of:

Qty	Item	Cost
1	AmeriCorps t-shirt Gray with logo and “Getting Things Done”	\$7.00
1	AmeriCorps sweat jacket Gray with logo and “Getting Things Done”	\$20.00
1	AmeriCorps cap Black	\$7.00
1	AmeriCorps lapel pin	\$1.00
2	AmeriCorps patches (one of each type) — Logo (round) — Getting Things Done (bar)	\$1.00 each
50	Business/ID cards (business cards can be laminated for use as IDs)	\$0.30 per sheet of 10
5	AmeriCorps decals (for hard hats, rain slickers, journals, etc.)	\$.10/each

Local program items

Corporation funds may be used only for official AmeriCorps service gear—you may not include money in your budget request for a local program uniform. To the extent that you are identifying AmeriCorps on your local program uniforms, the cost of printing, decals, or patches may be included in your budget request.

National affiliation items

To increase awareness of your service and the local impact of AmeriCorps members, programs are encouraged to use project site signs, banners, and other items to designate service sites. You are encouraged to purchase at least one banner per operational site, one bag of buttons per 50 members, one package of bumper stickers, and two rolls of stickers. Project signs may also be purchased for permanent display at completed project sites.

For further information on AmeriCorps service gear and affiliation items, please visit the catalog at www.nationalservicecatalog.org.

AmeriCorps and Other National Service Identity Items

AmeriCorps and other National Service identity items are now available on-line at www.nationalservicecatalog.org.

Promotional items include but are not limited to things like stickers, banners, site signs, pens and decals to identify your program and affiliation or promote a special day of service like MLK Day.

Uniform items for AmeriCorps are also available through the on-line catalog.

- ★ A printable version of the catalog and order form can be found on the website. For problems printing the catalog or placing orders on line, please contact David Premo at (202) 606-6717 or at dpremo@cns.gov.

Using the AmeriCorps Logo

Camera-ready logos are available from Mississippi Industries for the Blind for programs to use for service gear, stationery, signs, recruitment brochures, application forms, member curriculum and orientation materials, banners, press releases, and publications created by AmeriCorps members. In addition, logos can be downloaded for use from the Corporation's website at http://cns.gov/about/media_kit/index.asp

Restrictions on the use of the AmeriCorps Logo

In order to preserve the AmeriCorps identity, you must obtain written permission from the Corporation if you wish to:

- ★ use the AmeriCorps name or logo on materials that will be sold;
- ★ use the AmeriCorps name or logo on clothing not worn by members or alumni;
- ★ alter the AmeriCorps logo or use it as a part of any other logo or design; or
- ★ allow a donor to use the AmeriCorps name or logo in promotional material.

Please contact the CNCS Office of Public Affairs for further information on the use of the AmeriCorps logo.

Use of the AmeriCorps Name and Logo by Corporate Sponsors

Donors to local programs may not use the AmeriCorps name or logo in advertising or other promotional materials without the written permission of the Corporation. Permission may be withheld if recognition of the donor is inconsistent with the Corporation's policies and objectives.

Using the AmeriCorps Name and Logo in Publications

In addition to the many publications available from the Corporation for National and Community Service (such as handbooks, manuals, and recruitment and marketing materials), local programs often develop their own materials. To let others know of your affiliation with AmeriCorps, you may want to use the AmeriCorps name and logo in your publications. Publications that are distributed externally must include the following acknowledgment and disclaimer:

“This material is based upon work supported by the Corporation for National and Community Service under AmeriCorps Grant No. _____. Opinions or points of view expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of AmeriCorps or the Corporation for National and Community Service.”

Programs also must ensure that the publication is consistent with grant provisions limiting member activities (for example, no lobbying or religious materials).

Please send two copies of each external publication (newsletters, recruitment materials, press releases, etc.) to your state service commission and to the Corporation's Office of Public Affairs.

Common Identification

In addition to AmeriCorps service gear, there are many other ways in which the common look and affiliation may be advanced by programs. (Some of these items may be purchased with grant money.)

- ★ Members should identify themselves as AmeriCorps members and describe AmeriCorps appropriately.
- ★ Signs should identify sites as AmeriCorps project sites.
- ★ Program staff should be able to discuss AmeriCorps with visitors.
- ★ Stationery, brochures, fax cover sheets, and newsletters can identify the program as AmeriCorps, including the use of the logo.

- ★ Your community should be aware that the members are AmeriCorps members.
- ★ Press releases and other public materials should note that the program is part of the AmeriCorps national service network.
- ★ Logos may be downloaded at www.nationalservice.org/logos

Member Retention and Attrition

The program design is dependent upon the full enrollment of the number of member slots included in the grant ward. In addition to full enrollment, programs must vigorously pursue the highest retention rates attainable by the program model.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

AmeriCorps programs must establish and maintain fiscally sound programs that operate in compliance with federal and state statutes, CNCS regulations, and AmeriCorps provisions and policies. Your program must provide oversight and accountability for how you are spending funds and set up proper fiscal systems oversight and accountability to manage funds. Please refer to the CaliforniaVolunteers Fiscal Manual for more detailed information.

Setting Up Financial Systems

The grant award and its provisions contain many of the details and specifics governing the management of your grant. Your organization's financial officer and accountant should be familiar with the more detailed financial and management requirements contained in Corporation regulations, the grant and the applicable Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circulars.

In order to effectively manage and implement your program, you need to be familiar with the principal requirements applicable to AmeriCorps programs, such as member recruitment, training, prohibitions on lobbying, terms of service, minimum hours, etc. In addition, you should be familiar with the special limitations on use of funds that apply to AmeriCorps, such as the 5 percent limitation on federal funds for administrative costs and the prohibition on using budgeted member allowances and benefit funds for other program activities and expenses. All of these requirements have been recently revised and are detailed in the AmeriCorps provisions in your contract.

The basics of a good financial management system

To build a good financial management system, programs must use standard accounting practices with general ledgers and similar books of record, supported by source

documentation that establishes a clear audit trail. The financial reports must lead back to the ledgers and source documents clearly. Since you, as the program director, are responsible for the overall administration of the program, you should take an active role in understanding and monitoring the financial systems.

Programs must document the member hours through time and attendance records. You must have individual time distribution records for your staff who will be charged to the grant (in whole or in part) that allow you to identify all of their time and that segregate costs chargeable to the grant (distinguishing between administrative and programmatic functions) and costs not chargeable to the grant (such as fundraising). Grantees must segregate the financial duties in the office to the extent possible (for example, having one person sign the checks and another reconcile the bank statement). The organization must track specifically all property purchased with federal funds.

OMB Circulars

The OMB circulars cited in your contract address many of the details and specifics governing the management of a federal grant. If your organization has had other federal grants, it should already be familiar with the content. If not, your organization needs to familiarize itself with the circulars. If you have any questions, contact the grants officer assigned to your grant.

Common Problems

If your organization does not comply with the grant provisions and OMB requirements, costs that have been charged to the grant can be questioned or disallowed following an audit. If a program's financial management system is seriously inadequate, the granting agency or the Corporation can stop making advance grant payments, suspend funds, terminate the grant, recover funds, or take other legal steps.

Some of the most common problems are:

- ★ inadequate accounting practices;
- ★ poor internal controls;
- ★ inadequate documentation and record-keeping;
- ★ inaccurate financial status reports; and
- ★ undocumented matching contributions, particularly in-kind.

Allowable Costs

In general, a cost is allowable if it meets the following criteria:

- ★ It is reasonable and necessary for the performance of the grant award.
- ★ It conforms to the limitations and exclusions in the award as to types or amounts of cost items.
- ★ It is consistent with the policies and procedures of the grantee organization.
- ★ It is accorded consistent treatment.
- ★ It is documented adequately.

Taxes

Most programs are required to pay FICA. Under federal law, the FICA payment rate is 15.3 percent of the living allowance. Half (7.65 percent) is paid by the program and half is deducted from the member's living allowance. FICA payments cover Social Security and Medicare benefits. If this is included in your approved grant budget, programs may charge up to 85 percent of the Corporation's share of FICA against the grant.

Withholding Income Taxes

Under federal tax laws, ordinary income tax rules apply to member benefits. A living allowance is taxable as "compensation for services" and generally is subject to federal withholding. Room and board also may count as income subject to withholding, even though the members do not receive cash. Low-income members may be able to claim an exemption from withholding if (1) they had no tax liability in the previous year, and (2) they expect to have no tax liability in the current year. State income tax withholding laws also apply.

Like all personal income taxes, taxes on the living allowance are the responsibility of the individual member. Members must complete a W-4 form at the start of the term of service. At the end of the tax year, programs must provide members with a W-2 form.

Match Requirements

Cost Matching Requirements for AmeriCorps Programs (Excluding AmeriCorps Education Award Programs)

You are responsible for meeting the matching amounts in your negotiated grant award and budget. This amount based on your proposal may exceed the minimum matches required.

Valid documentation of match includes:

- ★ grant award documents from other entities;
- ★ timesheets and in-kind vouchers for services;
- ★ equipment and furnishings receipts for donated items;
- ★ leases and other sources documenting the value of donated space; and
- ★ copies of receipt given to donors of goods and services.

While Education Awards Program sponsors are contributing most or all of the costs of program operation, they are not required to document match contributions.

Fixed amount awards—Education Awards Programs

The AmeriCorps Education Award programs use fixed-amount awards. The financial requirements for this type of award differ significantly from other AmeriCorps grants.

For education awards programs, the fixed level of support is based on the specific number of members enrolled. Therefore, programs are able to claim federal funds based not on total costs incurred, but on the number of fellows/members as described above.

This method offers considerable benefits to grantees. Financial Status Reports (SF-269A), time and effort reports to program staff, documentation of costs under the Federal Cost Principles, and tracking of match costs are not required. Additionally, federal funds do not have to be itemized by budget categories. As a result, line item budgets have been eliminated from these awards. The fixed amount award is designed to reduce the administrative burden of grantees, and to directly link the awarding of federal funds with the service performed by members. Please refer to your provisions for more information.

Liability Insurance

Programs must have sufficient liability insurance to protect the organization, employees, and members. Members engaged in both on- and off-site project activities must be covered. You should review your current policies to ensure they cover non-employees in special statuses, such as members. Programs should decide how much liability coverage is sufficient, given the specific risk factors the program presents. General liability insurance is an administrative cost that can be pro-rated and charged against the grant (subject to your grant's administrative cost limit) or included in the program's match. If it is included in the approved budget, insurance purchased specifically to cover member liability can be charged as a direct program cost.

Chapter 4

Building a Strong Foundation

Program Design

California AmeriCorps Program Standards

STANDARD TWO — Needs and Services Design

Program is built to address the community need and all components logically connect back to that need. Program design is built to deliver the services that achieve the end outcomes. These elements apply to each direct service Performance Measurement Worksheet.

- 1) Program has clearly identified direct beneficiaries of the stated community need.
 - a) Referral process is clearly documented to identify the targeted population;
 - b) Clear process to select the beneficiaries with whom the intervention will have the most success.
- 2) Intervention is appropriate and will lead to desired results.
 - a) Intervention is research based – proven strategy to address need;
 - b) Identified the dosage of service to meet the target;
 - c) Activity is clearly defined and explains the process of the intervention.
- 3) National service is an appropriate strategy to deliver the intervention.
 - a) Member position type supports the design;
 - b) Program planned for AmeriCorps members;
 - c) Position descriptions provide a clear understanding of AmeriCorps duties ;
 - d) Program has identified qualifications, essential functions, minimum skills/education, etc. for AmeriCorps positions.
- 4) Host sites are appropriate and well managed.
 - a) Sites are selected based on their ability to conduct the intervention;
 - b) Program has formal orientation and training plan for placement sites;
 - c) Site supervisor is identified and trained at each member placement site;
 - d) Program has systems to provide routine oversight and support to placement sites;
 - e) Placement sites are actively involved in overall program success.

California AmeriCorps Program Standards

STANDARD FIVE – Program Design is Effective

Program representatives have successfully implemented the program and systems are in place to assess the effectiveness of the program model. There is adequate oversight to the management of each component to assure that contracted performance measures are implemented and analysis and stakeholder feedback leads to continuous improvement. Effective program design has a “**review process**” to gauge appropriate progress of the program throughout the program year:

- 1) Effective program has an “**initial review**” process that quickly checks assumptions of what needs to be in place for the program design to work:
 - a) Program has appropriate instrument(s) to gather pre-service data on targeted beneficiaries;
 - b) Program has completed the PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT PLAN (WBRS) for each instrument, outlining who is responsible for collecting, analyzing and reporting these pre-service data and the timeline associated with each step;
 - c) The pre-service data gathered is collected, analyzed and reported to inform decisions about the effectiveness of the design;
 - d) Analysis of the “initial review” process includes staffing patterns, member configuration, member/staff/site training, dosage, targeted beneficiaries, partner commitments, etc.
- 2) Effective program has an on-going “**implementation review**” process to confirm that the activities and processes are being implemented as designed:
 - a) Program has appropriate instruments to gather information on implementation of performance measures;
 - b) Program reviews attainment of established benchmarks and determines progress toward targets;
 - c) Program identifies challenges or barriers that effect ability to meet targets and seeks technical assistance from partners, commission, and other expertise.
- 3) Effective program has a “**results review**” process to assess impact of intervention toward meeting community need.
 - a) Program has answered the three results components for each outcome target: percent who change, what changed and the amount of change;
 - b) Program partners meet to discuss program outcomes and identify continuous improvement strategies.

- 4) An effective program has developed mechanisms to validate both qualitative and quantitative data from the “**review process**” and determine and incorporate corrective actions, as appropriate.
 - a) Program management and partners look at a variety of sources to determine program effectiveness;
 - b) Program management and partners ensure the reliability of the data and validation of the findings;
 - c) Program management and partners endorse and implement corrective action steps, as needed.

PROGRAM DESIGN – MEMBER POSITIONS

Selecting Member Service Positions

One element of program design is selecting the number and type of member service positions to be utilized by the program. In making such decisions, programs should consider the type of service to be provided (watershed restoration, mentoring, volunteer recruitment, etc.), the hours during which service can be provided (during the school day, afterschool, weekends, etc.), and the number of service hours needed to make a demonstrable impact on the identified community need in one year.

Originally, AmeriCorps members committed a year of their life to service through a full-time or half-time member position. These terms of service provided individuals with an intensive service experience as they served an average of 20-40 hours per week. Since its founding, AmeriCorps has developed additional terms of service (reduced half-time, quarter-time, and minimum-time) to provide programs and potential members with additional flexibility. This flexibility has provided many individuals, including college students, the opportunity to serve on a part-time, less intensive basis while pursuing other interests or commitments. CV continues to support the usage of all member terms of service. However, in light of the former problems with the National Service Trust which limited the number of member positions available nationwide during the last several program years, CV encourages programs to select the most intensive service position that will meet the needs of the program and its potential members.

Programs that wish to utilize reduced half-time, quarter-time, and minimum-time positions should note the specific recommendations for their use in the table below. Programs that use such positions must ensure that the positions provide members intensive service experiences. For example, CV will not support the use of a 300-hour position in a program where a member would serve 300 hours over the course of a calendar year, unless that member has special circumstances (e.g., is a full-time college student).

Term of Service	Minimum Number of Hours	<i>Recommendations for Use</i>
Full-time	1,700	
Half-time	900	
Reduced half-time	675	
Quarter-time	450	College students, afterschool programs, summer programs, others with similar program design needs
Minimum-time	300	College students, summer programs, others with similar program design needs

Designing positions in this manner enables members to experience the intensive terms of service that AmeriCorps was designed to provide. Further, it ensures that members derive the maximum possible benefit from their term of service since, by law, they may only earn two education awards in the course of their lifetime. Each education award – regardless of size – counts against this lifetime limit.

In addition, CV encourages programs to limit the number of member positions used in program designs. A program using multiple member positions, such as 1,700, 900, and 450 hours, can be difficult to manage as member recruitment and training activities vary considerably for these types of positions.

Building a Strong Foundation – Site Management

Member Supervision. As the experience of Corporation programs across the country demonstrates, successful member development and retention depends upon appropriate supervision and coaching. Programs are required to have qualified supervisors to provide members with regular and adequate oversight. Members may not serve as the legal supervisor of other members. Successful programs implement systems to provide members with close supervisory support, modeling behavior expected of a member while giving guidance on a consistent basis.

All programs must provide site supervisors with appropriate training, including relevant policies and procedures, prior to the placement of members at the service site. Costs associated with site supervisors, including salary and training, may be charged to the AmeriCorps grant or used as matching funds.

A site (or host site) is where members spend their service hours -- so establishing strong relationships with these sites is critical to your program's success. The site supervisor will be the day-to-day contact for your members; thus, attention to selection, orientation, and ongoing support at the site level will result in the delivery of high quality service as well as member satisfaction and retention. You should nurture these relationships, as it is an integral part of your program design. Site supervisors can make or break member experience!

Site Selection

A placement site or host site is where members perform the majority of their service hours. This could be an agency. Note that it may not be the main headquarters. For some programs this may be the legal applicant; for others it may be that members are placed in multiple organizations throughout the community. Regardless where the member reports daily, all member time must be supervised. When selecting a site consider the following:

- ★ Individuals at sites have the skills and time to supervise and sign member timesheets

- ★ If supervising tutors, there may be special requirements for these sites
- ★ Dedicated space and resources for members
- ★ Commitment to the program in the form of in-kind donation, training, to assist in providing program match funding
- ★ Agree to participate in the collection of data
- ★ Participate/involve in member recruitment and selection
- ★ Agree to attend site supervisor trainings and ongoing meetings and communications
- ★ Agreement that members will participate in AmeriCorps training, national service days and other community events.
- ★ Meet ADA requirements (see checklist in Appendix.)

Memorandum of Understanding

The relationship between your program and a site is formalized through a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the legal applicant and the host site. Some general components may include:

- ★ Mutual roles and responsibilities
- ★ Reporting requirements
- ★ Policies and procedures surrounding member supervision, disciplinary actions, and member behavior
- ★ Expected resource contribution
- ★ Member minimum no service hours
- ★ Time frame members have to complete service hours
- ★ Code of conduct
- ★ Match commitment
- ★ Restriction on federal funds being used to match member costs
- ★ Liability insurance

Site Preparation & Training

Prior to members arriving, the following activities should be considered:

- ★ Key staff from host site should have an AmeriCorps overview including a history of national service and the role of the member at your site
- ★ Member supervisor training –
 - Pre-service and ongoing training
 - Program mission as well as the performance measures
 - Data collection including timelines, use of tools, process
 - Reporting requirements for member time
 - Member performance appraisal
 - Communication channels – how the member signs in, when to contact the legal app, emergencies,
 - Policies and procedures surrounding member supervision, disciplinary actions, and member behavior
 - Develop specific site preparation for member's arrival
 - Identify specific site-related training that needs to occur and when
 - Member role: for direct service and/or recruiting and/or managing volunteers
 - Site's responsibilities in engaging and supporting volunteers (if applicable).
 - Participate in member selection process
 - Agree to provide outreach and screen members

You should create a handbook for every site as a reference manual.

For additional resources, best practices, and more information on site management please check the online resources or consult your program associate.

Performance Measures, Evaluation & Reporting Requirements

A Note on Terminology

The Corporation has selected performance measurement terminology to describe its approach to determining National Service program results. Other funding agencies may use different terms to describe these same performance measurement concepts. Please be aware of these differences when using non-CNCS performance measurement resources.

The National and Community Service Act of 1990, as amended, requires applicants for funding to develop measurable performance goals to determine the impact of AmeriCorps on communities and participants. The Corporation is placing increased emphasis on the importance of performance measures as both a program management tool and a means by which to communicate program impact.

Performance Measures. Performance measurement is a systematic way of measuring the amounts of goods produced, services delivered, and benefits experienced by service recipients and communities. Performance measurement can serve as a powerful management tool. It also empowers organizations by helping them demonstrate quantifiable results. As such, strong performance measures are advantageous to applicants as they compete for available funds.

Performance measures represent annual goals for the primary activities of AmeriCorps members. While the narrative section of the application provides an opportunity to describe the compelling, unmet community need and the desired result over the course of the AmeriCorps grant, performance measures track progress on an ongoing basis. It is expected that for each activity a program engages in, a measure of the amount of service provided or number of beneficiaries served can be tracked. Therefore, at a minimum, each performance measure must include an *output* measure and an *outcome target*. These terms are further defined below:

In the *Needs and Service Activities* and *Strengthening Communities* categories, *beneficiaries* refer to persons or organizations who receive services or benefits from a program, but *not* to AmeriCorps members or to staff assisting in the operation of the program.

Outputs are the amount or units of service that members or volunteers have completed, or the number of community beneficiaries the program has served. Outputs do not provide information on benefits or other changes in communities or in the lives of beneficiaries. Examples of outputs include the number of people a program tutors, counsels, houses, feeds.

Outcomes measure a change that has occurred in the direct beneficiaries (persons, organizations, the environment). Outcomes will indicate that a significant change has occurred. An example of a meaningful outcome is that previously underperforming students

have improved their reading scores to grade-level. *CV values outcomes that quantify long, lasting change related to the identified community need over those that quantify temporary change.*

Target numbers and percentages should represent the intensity and quantity of service hours dedicated to each activity. Each performance measure result will identify an indicator as to whether the program is having the intended effect. Progress toward these indicators will be monitored on an ongoing basis and will be considered in future funding decisions. CV's performance measurement requirements are summarized as follows:

General Requirements

- Programs must develop at least one performance measure in each of the program design categories: Needs and Service Activities, Member Development, and Strengthening Communities.
- Submit performance measures that are achievable at their target levels within a twelve month period;
- Revise performance measures in consultation with CV staff prior to submission to the Corporation;
- Participate in negotiating performance measures prior to contracting;
- Develop a system for collecting and organizing this performance data on an ongoing basis;
- Include the results in progress and final reports (on a yearly basis); and,
- Utilize data to continuously improve program operations.

Needs and Service Activities

- Programs must develop a set of performance measures that account for member's direct service activities.
- Programs must develop an aligned performance measure (output, intermediate outcome and end outcome) on their primary service activity. Primary service activity is defined as the member service activity for which the greatest number of member service hours (cumulative across the program) are dedicated. The outcome measure must detail a compelling impact on the identified community need.
- Performance measures for activities other than the primary service activity must include an output and outcome measure. Outcomes for these activities should detail an impact on the identified community need.

Member Development

- Programs must develop an output and outcome measure related to training provided to members in completing their term of service. For example, 20 members completed the member training plan (initial orientation and training, site-specific training, ongoing training, and Life After AmeriCorps training).
- Programs are encouraged to develop additional outcomes related to member development, including measures of member mastery of training content based on pre and post evaluations, or measures of the percentage of members who enter specific

education programs (such as teacher certification programs) or career paths (public or non-profit careers) following the completion of the term of service.

Strengthening Communities

- Programs that propose direct service programs must have a volunteer recruitment performance measure. CV has developed a standardized volunteer recruitment performance measure that tracks the total number of volunteers that members have directly recruited for service and the number of volunteer hours served. Programs that engage members solely in volunteer recruitment must adopt this performance measure. Programs engaged in both volunteer recruitment and support must adopt the standardized performance measure and track the number of volunteer hours provided by community volunteers.
- Programs proposing that members engage in capacity building activities beyond the volunteer recruitment requirement must develop a performance measure that includes an output and outcome for each activity. For example, a program who engages members in fundraising activities must develop an output of grant applications submitted and prepared by the AmeriCorps member, and an outcome, such as funding secured. Applicants are reminded that individual AmeriCorps members may not spend more than 10 percent of their term of service engaged in capacity building.

Minimum performance measure requirements are summarized in the following table:

	Output	Outcome
Needs and Service Activities	Primary Service Activity	Primary Service Activity (direct impact on community need)
	Other Service Activities	Other Service Activities
Member Development	Member Training Plan	Direct Impact on Member
Strengthening Communities	Volunteer Recruitment	
	Capacity Building Activities (if applicable)	Capacity Building Activities (if applicable)

During implementation of a grant, performance measures may need to be adjusted based on program experience. A program's record of meeting such performance measures will be considered in determining future funding. CV fully recognizes that performance measures will reflect individual program goals and circumstances, and expects that there will be a wide spectrum of different performance measures across all grantees. CV recognizes that performance measures alone do not reflect the full scope and impact of AmeriCorps programs. Therefore, these measures are not the only items that will be considered when evaluating an program success.

As part of a broader effort to aggregate impact data nationally and in California, the Corporation and CV may develop, in the future, a few performance measures in consultation with grantees that will apply to all AmeriCorps programs.

Evaluation. While performance measurement and evaluation both include systematic data collection and measurement of progress, evaluations use scientifically-based research methods to systematically investigate the effectiveness of programs. By comparing the observed program outcomes with what would have happened in the absence of the program, evaluations can help programs estimate their impacts.

The National and Community Service Trust Act specifies that an applicant arrange for an evaluation of an AmeriCorps national service program receiving assistance from the Corporation. All grantees – formula and competitive – with average annual grants of \$500,000 must arrange for independent evaluations. Competitive programs that do not meet the \$500,000 threshold are required to complete an internal evaluation. Formula programs with average grants of less than \$500,000 should also plan to conduct an internal evaluation. The Corporation defines independent and internal evaluation as follows:

Independent evaluation is that in which scientifically-based research methods are used to assess the effectiveness of programs. Scientifically-based research can be broadly defined as using appropriate research design, methods, and techniques to ensure that the methods used can reliably address the research questions and support the conclusions. Scientifically-based research describes research that involves the application of rigorous, systematic, and objective procedures to obtain reliable and valid knowledge relevant to activities and programs. Independent evaluation uses an external evaluator who has no formal or personal relationship with, or stake in, the administration, management or finances of the grantee or of the program to be evaluated

Internal evaluation is an evaluation the program performs in-house without the use of an independent external evaluator.

Programs starting their 3-year cycle in 2007 were required to include a summary of its evaluation plan (internal or independent) as part of its program narrative. The plan included consideration of the program's evaluation question(s), potential methods to be used (control groups, national norms, random assignment, etc.), period of time the evaluation will cover, who will conduct evaluation (internal evaluator, outside consultant, program partner, etc.), and how the evaluation will be funded. Further, program budgets included evidence of plans to conduct an evaluation. Expenses related to evaluations are allowable grant expenses. In addition, grantees may wish to develop partnerships with institutions of higher education for evaluation expertise and assistance.

Current CNCS guidance requires future applications for continuation funding (for the 2010-11 program year) to include a completed evaluation that covers a minimum of one year. Programs are strongly encouraged to evaluate program activities so that evaluation results are available for submission with the recompetes application (approximately October of 2009). Both CV and the Corporation will consider such evaluation studies when making judgments about a program's application for future funding.

Below is a summary of the current guidelines; CV will continue to seek clarification on behalf of our California programs:

Overview

Performance measurement and evaluation are related but distinct. By using both of these data collection methods, programs can most effectively understand their work and their progress.

Performance measures are designed to capture ongoing progress towards meeting program objectives. These ongoing program performance assessments should be supplemented with more in-depth, rigorous evaluations that isolate the *particular impacts* of national and community service programs. Evaluation refers to an analytic study providing an overall picture of the results that can be attributed directly to program activities. Specifically, evaluations compare the difference between the outcomes for individuals participating in a program to the outcomes for similar individuals not participating in a program.

Designing an Evaluation

In completing evaluations, the Corporation recognizes that different applicants will face different challenges and bring different resources to the table. To allow programs flexibility in addressing these issues, the Corporation does not prescribe a single methodology for evaluation. Instead, the Corporation has identified a broader set of guidelines based on generally accepted research standards. Evaluations should include:

- rigorous, systematic, and objective research methods;
- procedures to collect reliable and valid data relevant to activities and programs;
- experimental or quasi-experimental designs in which individuals or programs are compared utilizing appropriate controls to evaluate the effects of the condition of interest, with a preference for random assignment experiments;
- procedures to control for the influence of other factors through the use of control or comparison groups so that any changes in outcomes can be attributed to participation in the program; and,
- methods presented in sufficient detail and clarity to allow for replication or, at a minimum, offer the opportunity to build systematically on their findings.

These efforts should include engaging an evaluator with expertise in scientifically-based research methods at the beginning of the program year. Although evaluations are most often conducted by an independent researcher, there may be evaluation approaches that meet the standards described above without the use of an outside evaluator.

In planning for a rigorous, scientifically-based study of program outcomes, it is important to determine an appropriate scope of the activities to be evaluated. Evaluations are intended to investigate program effectiveness as broadly as possible. But if your program includes a wide range of distinct service activities, you should select activities for rigorous evaluation that best reflect the overall mission of the program and the service activities carried out.

Resources

There are a number of resources available to assist you as you begin to think about your program evaluation:

- Project Star has created a User's Guide to Evaluation for National Service Programs, available at www.projectstar.org/star/Library/toolkit.html.
- The United Way of America provides an overview of outcome-based evaluation at www.unitedway.org/outcomes.

Local resources can be helpful for program applicants in responding to the evaluation section of the application. Suggested institutions to contact for assistance include universities/colleges, research firms, or other community organizations that may be using a local resource for their performance measurement and evaluations.

Keep in mind that choosing the "right" local resource that will meet your needs is critical. Identify the specific tasks you would like the local resource to assist you with (e.g., instrument development, data analysis). You should stay involved in the evaluation process throughout your program year. In other words, don't pass the entire task of evaluation to your local resource. You may not get what you need in the end.

The cost of having the local resource assist you is another issue to bear in mind. The cost will depend on the amount of effort you would like the local resource to assume. The more involved you are in your evaluation, the less your local resource will need to do, reducing costs. For a discussion of budgeting and planning for evaluation, see the *W. K. Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Toolkit* available at <http://www.wkkf.org/default.aspx?tabid=75&CID=281&NID=61&LanguageID=0>.

CNCS Guidance on Performance Measures and Logic Models

At a minimum, AmeriCorps programs are required to develop and submit as part of their program application, one set of aligned performance measures — one output, one intermediate outcome, and one end outcome. The aligned set of measures should capture the results of the program's primary activity or area of significant activity for programs whose design precludes identifying one primary activity. Any additional performance measures you submit may or may not be aligned. *The Corporation encourages you to exceed the minimum requirements for developing performance measures.*

Outputs are the amount or units of service that members or volunteers have completed, or the number of community beneficiaries the program has served. Examples include service hours completed by members and volunteers, neighborhood cleanup projects completed, and disaster preparedness training sessions conducted. Outputs answer the question, "How much work did we do?" but do not answer the question, "What changed as a result of our work?"

Intermediate-outcomes specify a change that has occurred in communities or in the lives of community beneficiaries or members, but is not necessarily a lasting benefit for them. For example, if your final result is to improve student academic performance, then intermediate outcomes might include improved attitudes towards school and reduced truancy. These are likely preconditions for improved academic performance. Positive results for intermediate outcomes are usually a sign that your program is on track to achieve the related end outcomes.

End-outcomes specify a change that has occurred in communities or in the lives of community beneficiaries or members, that is significant and lasting.

Creating a Set of Aligned Performance Measures

The following steps describe how to develop an aligned set of performance measures:

Step 1: Choose a primary or significant activity area.

A primary activity might include one or more of the following elements:

- ★ A service activity that represents your AmeriCorps program's primary purpose and objectives
- ★ An activity area where members put most of their effort and time
- ★ An activity area in which all or most of the members participate
- ★ An activity that addresses one of the Corporation's strategic initiatives
- ★ For intermediary organizations, a significant activity can be that which most or many sites are implementing.

Step 2: (Recommended): Develop a logic model for your activity.

This process can:

- ★ Help you clarify your overall program design/theory of change.
- ★ Help you clarify the desired results you are trying to achieve and identify the key program elements that must be tracked.
- ★ Help you develop a set of aligned performance measures

A logic model provides a concise visual representation of activities that are the core of your program. The logic model below consists of six components.

Logic Model Components

Need → Inputs → Activities → Outputs → Intermediate Outcomes → End Outcomes

- **Community Need:** The unmet need in your community that your activity will address.
- **Inputs:** Resources used to produce outputs and outcomes. • **Activities:** What a program does with the inputs.
- **Outputs:** The products and services delivered (e.g., students tutored, trees planted).
- **Intermediate Outcomes:** Changes that have occurred in the lives of the beneficiaries and/or members, but have fallen short of a significant benefit for them. These may include quality indicators such as timeliness and client satisfaction.
- **End Outcomes:** Changes that have occurred in the lives of beneficiaries and/or members that constitute significant benefits to them.

For more detailed information on logic models, see Section II of the Performance Measurement Toolkit at

http://nationalserviceresources.org/resources/online_pubs/perf_meas/pmtoolkit.php .

Step 3: Identify an output to be measured

Identify an output to be measured from your primary activity or area of significant activity and write a statement. The output is often the number of people served.

Step 4: Identify an intermediate outcome

Identify an intermediate outcome for the same primary activity or area of significant activity. This intermediate outcome should be aligned with your output. In other words, the intermediate outcome should measure intended changes in the same beneficiaries identified in your output. Write a statement: what changes will occur for beneficiaries because of the

activity? Intermediate outcomes are not end outcomes measured mid year. They are changes that link with end outcomes.

Step 5: Identify an end outcome

Identify an end outcome for the same primary activity or area of significant activity. This end outcome should be aligned with your output and intermediate outcome, and should measure a significant and lasting change that your beneficiaries will experience by the end of the program year. The end outcome should link sequentially with your intermediate outcome. Write a statement: what significant changes will occur for beneficiaries because of the primary or significant activity? Often, a helpful way to approach this task is to begin with the end outcome and work back to the output. Remember, the end outcome is directly related to what you identified as your community need for this activity.

Step 6: Identify the indicators, targets and instruments for each result

Once you have identified your three desired results, you will need to identify the indicators, targets and instruments for each of the three performance measures in the set.

- ★ **Indicators** are the specific, measurable things you will measure to show you achieved your desired result. Indicators answer the question, “What is my evidence that something has occurred?” Output indicator usually begins with “Number of...” Outcome indicator usually begins with “Percent of...”
- ★ **Targets** describe amount of work or level of change you anticipate achieving in one year due to efforts of your members. Targets relate directly to the indicator and use the same language but substituting an actual number for the words “Number of ” or “Percent of”.
- ★ **Instruments** are the documents, tools, or forms used to collect the information you need to track your desired results from the appropriate data sources.

Reporting

There are two main types of reporting AmeriCorps programs are required to do: fiscal and programmatic. Programs are required to electronically submit quarterly programmatic progress reports that detail their accomplishments and impacts to date.

Quarterly cumulative Progress Reports are submitted via WBRS/APR system according to the following timeline: October 15, January 15, April 15, July 15, and October 15, and (if applicable) 14 business days after the program-end for programs ending after September 30. For information on fiscal reporting, consult the fiscal manual.

APR Overview

The APR (AmeriCorps Progress Reporting module) is not the progress report itself. When you've finished entering data into your APR, you're ready to create your Progress Report. The Progress Report will automatically [inherit](#) data from your APR documents already in the system.

The Progress Report has eight sections.

- ◆ **Section I: Basics** - Provides basic program data including program name and contact information.
- ◆ **Section II: Member Data** – Automatically aggregates your slots and number of members by type of service term as well as year to date member hours from the all time logs in the system up to the report date specified. To insure accurate reporting, you need to be sure all member data is in the system before submitting your Progress Report.
- ◆ **Section II: Volunteer Data** – Requires manual data input of the number of NON-AmeriCorps volunteers involved in AmeriCorps service activities and NON-AmeriCorps Members' Hours of Service.
- ◆ **Section IV: Performance Measurement** – Aggregates output data and lists outcome data entered in the APR Map to show progress towards your performance measures. Data must be entered in the appropriate place in the APR Map to show up correctly in the Progress Report.
- ◆ **Section V: Great Stories** – Requires manual selection of great stories for the report time period which have been previously entered in WBRS via the Great Stories component of the APR Tab in order to be included in the Progress Report.
- ◆ **Section VI: Challenges and Significant Program Changes** – Narrative box for you to type in any challenges you have experienced during this reporting period and how you plan to address them as well as identifying any significant program changes you have experienced and why. It is important to be very open about the realities of your program operations in this section as it insure the commissions understands what is going on so they can provide you additional assistance, as appropriate.
- ◆ **Section VII: Attachments** – This optional section of the report allows you to upload documents to your Progress Report to be submitted as supplemental material. Commonly attached documents include: press releases or articles, evaluation reports, etc.
- ◆ **Section VIII: Comments** – Manually input additional comments you wish to make.

For assistance with the APR Map and creating progress reports in WBRS, go to: the WBRS Help Manual online or consult your program associate.

Chapter 5

Building a Strong Foundation

AmeriCorps Member Management

California AmeriCorps Program Standards

STANDARD THREE – AmeriCorps Member Design

Partnerships are required to recruit, train, support and retain AmeriCorps members to carry out activities designed to address the compelling community need. Programs must provide members with the training, skills, knowledge and supervision necessary to perform the tasks required in their assigned project positions, including specific training in a particular field and background information on the community served. Programs must clearly outline member expectations including roles, responsibilities, personal conduct and commitment to serve. Program design ensures that each member has sufficient opportunity to complete the required number of hours to qualify for a post-service education award. In planning for the members' term of service, program calendar accounts for holidays and other time off, and provides each member with sufficient opportunity to make up missed hours.

- 1) Program has developed an inclusive recruitment plan, including a timeline.
 - a) Plan contains outreach strategies to market member opportunities to targeted populations;
 - b) Recruitment plan includes marketing materials which clearly describe: AmeriCorps service opportunities, member roles, responsibilities and expectations, inclusion, a description of the community, activities, qualifications, member benefits and term of service;
 - c) Service opportunities are posted on the national recruitment database;
 - d) Program utilizes an AmeriCorps application that complies with AmeriCorps regulations;
 - e) Recruitment timeline considers selection process timeline and program start date to achieve a minimum of 90% enrollment.
- 2) Program has a clearly defined selection process to assure compliance with AmeriCorps regulations.
 - a) Selection process includes a member application and reference review;
 - b) Selection process includes an interview process involving placement site representation;
 - c) Selection process includes an assessment of candidate background, commitment to service and experience and skills in order to effectively match members to appropriate positions and sites;
 - d) Intake process clearly documents member eligibility and other program requirements (vaccinations, skills testing, etc.);
 - e) Intake process documents local/national fingerprint clearance and background checks, where applicable.

- 3) Program has developed an orientation plan designed to prepare members for the term of service. At a minimum, the orientation covers:
 - a) History of national service with specific focus on AmeriCorps;
 - b) Geographic/demographics of community, compelling need being addressed, targeted community, program mission/goals, partnership, performance measures and expectation of members;
 - c) Program calendar covering project timeline including required national days of service, community events, holidays, training and direct service hours to ensure successful completion of term of service;
 - d) Member rights and responsibilities including code of conduct, prohibited activities, requirements under the Drug-Free Workplace Act, suspension and termination from service, grievance procedures, sexual harassment, other non-discrimination issues and member performance reviews;
 - e) Member benefits including timesheet and stipend distribution, health care, child care, education award;
 - f) Training required to equip members with any basic knowledge and skills needed before beginning service;
 - g) Site orientation including site supervision, expectations, communication channels and member responsibilities to the site;
 - h) Review of member contract/handbook;
 - i) Review of safety plans and emergency procedures;
 - j) Formally acknowledges AmeriCorps commitment through swearing-in ceremony including the AmeriCorps oath.
- 4) Each member has been officially enrolled in AmeriCorps and the National Service Trust through a signed member contract and enrollment form/WBRS entry. The member contract stipulates:
 - a) The minimum number of service hours and other requirements (as developed by the program) necessary to successfully complete the term of service and to be eligible for the education award;
 - b) Program start and end dates, specifically focused on member term of service;
 - c) Distribution of living allowance, if applicable;
 - d) Acceptable conduct;
 - e) Prohibited activities, including those specified in the regulations;
 - f) Requirements under the Drug-Free Workplace Act;
 - g) Suspension and termination rules;
 - h) The specific circumstances under which a member may be released for 'cause';
 - i) The position description;
 - j) Grievance procedures;
 - k) Member signature and date.
- 5) AmeriCorps members are registered and managed in WBRS within 30 days of their official start and end dates according to the following process:
 - a) A commitment was entered into commitment tracker within 30 days of making an offer to an AmeriCorps members;

- b) Member Information Profile is created and approved within 30 days of each member's start date;
 - c) Member enrollment form is created and approved within 30 days of each member's start date;
 - d) Members are exited from the system within 30 days of each member's end date.
- 6) Program has a training plan, covering the program year, which uses service experiences to help members achieve the skills and education needed for productive active citizenship. The training plan includes the following:
- a) Training hours account for no more than 20% of the aggregate member hours;
 - b) Identify skills need to perform activities as outlined on performance measure worksheet;
 - c) Site/partner mandated trainings;
 - d) Assessment of member skill levels against the skills required list (see b);
 - e) Input from site supervisors and members;
 - f) Training required to develop skills and knowledge for all member activities;
 - g) Teambuilding and esprit de corps;
 - h) Opportunities for site specific training, as required;
 - i) Training that will assist members in their transition from their AmeriCorps positions (Life After AmeriCorps).
- 7) Program is designed to provide a high quality member experience through direct member supervision.
- a) Supervision structure provides opportunities for individual one-on-one time with each member;
 - b) Supervision structure provides linkage to support services, as necessary;
 - c) Closure activities to support members through transition from service experience to achieve life goals;
 - d) Conducts a midterm and end-of-term written evaluation of each member's performance for full and part-time members and an end-of-term for less than half-time members. Performance evaluations include factors such as:
 - i) Whether the member has completed the required number of hours;
 - ii) Whether the member has satisfactorily completed assignments; and
 - iii) Whether the member has met other performance criteria that were clearly communicated at the beginning of the term of service.
- 8) Member development activities, as described by performance measurement worksheets, are tracked and documented:
- a) Program representatives adequately deliver to members a continuum of skill development needed both during and after service;
 - b) End outcomes directly reflect member growth and progress;
 - c) Program achieves member development outcome targets.

MEMBER MANAGEMENT

Member recruitment, selection and enrollment requirements are in the Corporation's regulations at 45 C.F.R. Part 2522

Recruitment

AmeriCorps programs generally recruit throughout the year. Your recruitment efforts should start early enough to allow sufficient time to thoroughly engage in the process of member recruitment and selection in order to be ready for your program start date. The Corporation is paying increasing attention to program enrollment and retention rates, so you need to be sure to allow enough time for your program to do a quality job selecting your members. The enrollment standard is 90% of allotted MSYs and retention is 90% of those members enrolled.

Remember, the overall quality of your program is highly dependent on the commitment and attitude of your members so putting in the time up front to select appropriate people can save you many headaches later. As you are setting up your timeline, remember to take into consideration how long the screening process might take. Note that you may need to build in additional time for deeper screening for such things as a background checks, finger printing, health screenings, skills testing proficiency and written or academic testing. Your program is responsible for training and supervising members, for assigning service activities, for supporting and evaluating their performance, for safeguarding safety, and for providing liability coverage. For the CNCS AmeriCorps Recruitment Manual, go to: http://www.americorps.gov/pdf/recruitment_manual.pdf.

Positions Descriptions

A member position description is an important written document that outlines the essential duties members will be performing during their term of service. A good way to begin writing an accurate description is to contact your partnership affiliates to identify characteristics required or preferred in potential member candidates (e.g., degrees, skills, language). Then, take a look at your performance measures to capture all of the activities that the members are expected to perform during their placement or term of service. Make sure you create a comprehensive description of expectations for the position. Remember, ultimately this position description is an integral part of the recruitment process and serve as a guide for members during their term of service. Since a position description is a required piece of the member contract, members are agreeing to perform the essential tasks outlined in the description. A good and accurate description will eliminate any surprises.

Here are some key things to remember:

- ★ Position descriptions should be reviewed at the beginning of the year and there are no unallowable activities.
- ★ Position descriptions serve as a road map to the hours required in a “term of service”
- ★ For each position, you must have a position description

Roles and Responsibilities of Team Leaders

The National and Community Service Act, as amended, provides for approved national service positions to include a “position involving service as a crew leader in a youth corps program or a similar position supporting a national service program that receives an approved national service position” 42 U.S.C § 12573(6). This language allows programs, in addition to youth corps, to use AmeriCorps members to provide an additional layer of leadership and support for members under certain conditions.

The following is guidance on the use of AmeriCorps members as Team Leaders. Because of the need to ensure that Team Leader functions and staff functions remain clearly distinct, Corporation program officers may request a description of Team Leaders’ roles and responsibilities.

Team Leaders are not permitted to act in a staff capacity. Supervising members is a staff responsibility. Team Leaders must not be responsible for program development and coordination, however, they may assist by providing information and resources on best practices or by helping to develop portions of the program such as the training curriculum. In essence, under no circumstances should an AmeriCorps member serving as a Team Leader be the individual legally responsible for the program or other members.

The Team Leader position description should predominantly include activities that involve them in performing direct service or providing support to members engaged in direct service.

Examples of *allowable* Team Leader activities:

- ★ working alongside members performing direct service, to serve as a model and to provide on the spot assistance;
- ★ training members; providing guidance to members; providing support to members, including reflection exercises, conflict resolution, advice for transitioning out of AmeriCorps, etc.;
- ★ arranging member development activities;
- ★ building a sense of esprit de corps and general team cohesion among members; leading monthly/weekly meeting of members;
- ★ leading and facilitating team service projects;

- ★ working with the community to develop partnerships, including community volunteers, that will support the members' projects; and
- ★ communicating with program staff, site supervisors, and other members to ensure the execution of a quality program that is consistent with the AmeriCorps provisions.

While Team Leaders are not to serve as the program's administrative staff, they may be engaged, on a limited basis, in activities that support the administration of the AmeriCorps program. These include:

- ★ raising funds or in-kind contributions in direct support of specific AmeriCorps projects, such as team service projects. See Section 5 of the AmeriCorps Provisions for greater detail regarding members and fundraising; and
- ★ participating in recruitment activities for new members.

Examples of *unallowable* Team Leader activities:

- ★ signing member timesheets;
- ★ evaluating member performance;
- ★ disciplining AmeriCorps members;
- ★ enrolling/dismissing AmeriCorps members;
- ★ writing and/or signing program reports;
- ★ managing the program's payroll and budget

Developing a Recruitment Strategy

This section is intended to give you some basic strategies that you can adapt to recruit members from your community and information on how you can tap into the national pool of applicants. More detailed information is available at the Corporation's website www.americorps.org/resources.

Whether you recruit locally or nationally, you are encouraged to target your recruitment activities to as many audiences as are appropriate. Diversity is an important issue in recruitment, and can be represented in many ways: age, gender, sexual orientation, economic, education background, race and ethnicity, skills, and physical abilities.

First, take some time to plan your general recruitment strategy, which should include:

- ★ position descriptions for your members describing the essential functions of the service opportunity;
- ★ a list of target groups that may be able to fill the positions (including partners, host sites, and other stakeholders); and

- ★ ways to make sure that your target groups are aware of your organization and the positions available.

Developing a Recruiting Message

Once you develop a list of target groups, think of different ways you can market or “sell” your AmeriCorps message to each group. Remember to vary your approach because not all people will respond to the same message. Below are some basic “selling” points:

- ★ appeal of AmeriCorps and service
- ★ give back to your community
- ★ gain job skills and career networks
- ★ travel/meet new people/adventure
- ★ deferment for qualified student loans
- ★ education award to pay off student loans or for further education
- ★ opportunity to apply education and experience to help communities

Target your materials. What would attract an applicant to your program? Applicants want to know what they’ll be doing and what they’ll gain from service as an AmeriCorps member. Target your approach to specific audiences. For example, if your project focuses on education, advertise to education majors the valuable classroom experience that they’ll gain as AmeriCorps members. Ask your current members to comment on your existing materials and give you either formal or informal reactions. Even though you don’t need to incorporate all of their comments you are likely to receive some helpful feedback.

Make it personal. Personal contact makes the difference. Use your alumni (or current members on non-service hours) to attend a state fair, conference, or school career day to share their experiences. Consider holding an information session with the contacts that you’ve made. Invite your current members, service alumni, and other members in the area to share their experiences and give potential applicants a firsthand account of your program.

Respond quickly and follow up. Keep a record of people you’ve sent applications to or who have requested further information. Follow up with them with a postcard, phone call, or e-mail to invite them to take the next step. Offer suggestions to them on completing the application.

Collaborate and ask for help. There may be other programs recruiting in your area--check with them and find out how you can combine mailings, or share space at events with other programs. They may even have a list of people they were unable to place who could be perfect for your program. Also network with other parts of the national service network, including National Senior Service Corps and/or Learn and Serve programs in your area.

Network. People often decide to do something because someone they respect or trust has suggested it. Ask local high school counselors, college placement officers, and community leaders to promote AmeriCorps and your program. Again, consider your target audiences and the attraction that your program would hold for them.

Order your materials. Use the AmeriCorps Material Request Form which can be found at: http://www.americorps.gov/for_organizations/tta/forms.asp to order any recruitment materials that you need.

Here are some things you will need to keep in mind as you develop your recruitment plans:

- ★ **Recruitment Package** (including application and program materials, community background, etc.) A standard AmeriCorps application is available for use by AmeriCorps programs (find it online at: http://www.americorps.gov/for_organizations/tta/forms.asp). However your program may develop your own application form to ensure collection of any specialized or critical enrollment information you require for member tracking. In addition to any application completed, note that all selected members must complete the standardized enrollment form.
- ★ **Outreach plan** that includes such opportunities as college fairs, business conferences, local newspapers, bulletin boards, partner contacts, and community forums.
- ★ **Screening process** including a paper screen, reference checks, interviews, and any additional steps required by your program.

Application Form

The Corporation has created a standard application for AmeriCorps, which you are encouraged to use as the application for your program. If you have your own application, you are asked to accept the AmeriCorps application from potential candidates who have called the national AmeriCorps hotline. You are welcome to use your own supplementary materials. If requested, programs must make their forms available in alternative formats for individuals with disabilities. If you need copies of the AmeriCorps application, call (800) 942-2677; TTY: (800) 833-3722.

If your program has its own application form, it may be beneficial to include an area where an individual lists any other AmeriCorps experience. If an individual is selected for a third or more term of service not in keeping with Corporation policy and regulations, the program will be liable for any Corporation funds used to support that individual.

The Online AmeriCorps Recruitment and Placement System (AC★RPS)

AC★RPS, the web-based system for the recruitment and placement of AmeriCorps members, (<https://recruit.cns.gov>) allows individuals to learn about AmeriCorps programs throughout the country, to search for programs based on selected criteria and to apply on-line. It allows programs to search for individuals based on select criteria and to contact these individuals via e-mail. Programs may also receive and approve applications on-line.

The AC★RPS system is designed to generate interest in serving in AmeriCorps, to simplify the application process and to increase customer service to program staff and to potential applicants. A procedure is in place for potential members without internet access to become users by utilizing the toll-free number (800) 942-2677.

You can now register your program by visiting: <https://recruit.cns.gov/programregister/>. You will need your 14-digit program code. Once you are a registered user, you can add your program listing, update an existing listing, and search for potential members.

Once you log on to AC★RPS you'll be able to review listing information provided by other AmeriCorps programs. This may help you prepare your program listing information.

Once you register your program, you will be contacted via AC★RPS' automated e-mail communication any time an individual has applied to your program. We encourage you to respond to individuals, who use AC★RPS to contact your program, as soon as possible. Most applicants will apply to multiple AmeriCorps programs, and a prompt response will enhance your chances of securing good candidates.

Member Eligibility

Before offering a member a service assignment, you must make sure the potential member is eligible to serve as an AmeriCorps member.

To be eligible to enroll in AmeriCorps, an individual must:

- ★ be a U.S. citizen or U.S. national or a lawful permanent resident alien of the United States;
- ★ be at least 17 years old (or at least 16 years of age if the member is out of school and a participant in a youth corps or a program for certain disadvantaged individuals); and
- ★ have a high school diploma or GED or agree to obtain one while serving.

Programs must ascertain and document the citizenship/ lawful permanent resident alien status of the members, a record of which should be kept in the member's file and should be noted on the member checklist in the Member Information Profile in WBRS. When enrolling members in WBRS, program directors also must attest to the member's eligibility to serve

under the age guidelines found in the AmeriCorps Grant Provisions. WBRS will automatically prompt users if such determination needs to be made and recorded on the Member Information Profile.

Second, you must create a member file and include in it all the appropriate documentation.

Primary documentation of status as U.S. citizen or national. The following are acceptable forms of certifying status as a United States citizen or national:

- ★ a birth certificate showing that the individual was born in one of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, American Samoa, or the Northern Mariana Islands;
- ★ an unexpired U.S. passport issued to an individual as a U.S. citizen;
- ★ report of Birth Abroad of a Citizen of the United States (U.S. Dept. of State Form FS-240);
- ★ certificate of birth—foreign service (U.S. Dept. of State Form FS-545);
- ★ certification of Report of Birth (U.S. Dept. of State Form DS-1350); INS certificate of naturalization (INS form N-550 or N-570); or
- ★ INS certificate of citizenship (INS form N-560 or N-561).

Primary documentation of status as a lawful permanent resident alien of the U.S. The following are acceptable forms of certifying status as a lawful permanent resident alien of the United States.

- ★ Permanent Resident Card or Alien Registration Receipt Card (INS Form I-551) an unexpired passport indicating that the INS has approved it as temporary evidence of lawful admission for permanent residence; or
- ★ a departure record (INS Form I-94) indicating that the INS has approved it as temporary evidence of lawful admission for permanent residence.

Secondary documentation. If primary documentation is not available, the program must obtain written approval from the Corporation that other documentation is sufficient to demonstrate the individual's status as a U.S. citizen, U.S. national, or lawful permanent resident alien.

Please note that individuals who are in the United States under a student, work, or tourist visa are not eligible to become AmeriCorps members. Similarly, individuals who have refugee status but nothing indicating permanent resident alien status are not eligible to become AmeriCorps members.

Minimum Requirements for Terms of Service

The term of service must be defined as including at least 1,700 hours of participation over a period of 9 to 12 months for full-time members or at least 900 hours over a period of up to two years for part-time members. Members can serve a reduced term of fewer than 900 hours if approved and contained in the grant agreement. Holidays, leave time, and other absences may not be counted toward service hours, but should be included in the programmatic year. Members' terms of service must be defined in the member contract. The program must provide contracts to the members upon their acceptance into the program.

Limitations on Terms of Service

Number of education awards

Under no circumstances will an individual be eligible to receive more than two education awards. These can be earned during the first two terms of national service. Even if a member does not complete his or her service requirement and does not receive an education award, that term of service counts as one of his or her first two terms.

Serving more than two terms

The national service laws and Corporation policies impose certain restrictions within the various programs on the number of terms an individual may serve within that program. The following table outlines the limitations on the number of terms one may serve within the different AmeriCorps programs.

<i>AmeriCorps Program Type</i>	<i>Maximum Number of Terms within each type of AmeriCorps Program</i>
AmeriCorps*State/National/ITT/Leaders	2
AmeriCorps*NCCC	2
AmeriCorps*VISTA	3

(The AmeriCorps*State/National and Indian Tribes and Territories programs include the special categories of Education Awards programs, and America Reads programs.)

The Corporation has determined that individuals may, nonetheless, serve up to three terms of service across the different types of AmeriCorps programs and may receive Corporation-funded member benefits as long as the caps on the number of terms of service within each program are maintained. In no event may an individual serve more than a total of three terms in any combination of AmeriCorps programs. A term of service includes full-time, part-time, and reduced part-time service, as well as an uncompleted term (e.g., if a member leaves a program part-way through the term).

The following table shows the different possibilities for individuals interested in serving more than one term. While other combinations totaling three terms may also be permissible (including service in Education Awards programs, for example), under no circumstances will an individual be eligible to receive more than two education awards.

Eligibility Based Upon Prior National Service Experience

If you have completed one term in...	and you have completed a second term in...	Then you can serve a third term in...
AmeriCorps*VISTA	VISTA	VISTA AmeriCorps*State or National NCCC Promise Fellows
	AmeriCorps*State or National	VISTA AmeriCorps*State or National NCCC Promise Fellows
	NCCC	VISTA AmeriCorps*State or National NCCC Promise Fellows
	Promise Fellows	VISTA AmeriCorps*State or National NCCC Promise Fellows
AmeriCorps*State or National	VISTA	VISTA AmeriCorps*State or National NCCC Promise Fellows
	AmeriCorps*State or National	VISTA NCCC Promise Fellows
	NCCC	VISTA AmeriCorps*State or National NCCC Promise Fellows
	Promise Fellows	VISTA AmeriCorps*State or National NCCC Promise Fellows
AmeriCorps*NCCC	VISTA	VISTA AmeriCorps*State or National NCCC Promise Fellows
	AmeriCorps*State or National	VISTA AmeriCorps*State or National NCCC Promise Fellows
	NCCC	VISTA AmeriCorps*State or National Promise Fellows
	Promise Fellows	VISTA AmeriCorps*State or National NCCC Promise Fellows

Criminal Background Checks

AmeriCorps Provisions require that programs with members (18 and over) or grant-funded employees who, on a recurring basis, have access to children (usually defined under state or local law as un-emancipated minors under the age of 18) or to individuals considered vulnerable by the program (i.e. the elderly or individuals who are either physically or mentally disabled), shall, to the extent permitted by state and local law, conduct criminal background checks on these members or employees as part of the overall screening process.

The Commission recognizes the importance of criminal record checks for individuals who serve children and other vulnerable individuals. State Law requirements change frequently and can be confusing or contradictory. For example, several sections of California Code pertain to criminal records checks and their documentation. The Education Code, the Penal Code, and the Health and Safety Code, among others, each include rules regarding whose background must be checked, by whom, and how documentation shall be maintained. Depending upon the AmeriCorps program design (i.e., legal applicant type, service site, number of service hours per week, type of supervision for members, etc.), one or more of these code sections may apply.

California Health and Safety Code Section 1596.80 (i), for example, states that “a volunteer providing time-limited specialized services shall be exempt from the requirements of this subdivision [criminal record checks] if this person is directly supervised by the licensee or a facility employee with a criminal record clearance or exemption, the volunteer spends no more than 16 hours per week at the facility, and the volunteer is not left alone with children in care.”

Therefore, partnerships must determine the need to conduct a criminal background check (fingerprinting) for each member position AND must ensure, to the extent permitted by state law, that it maintains background check documentation for members and employees covered by this provision in the member or employee’s file or other appropriate file. The documentation must demonstrate that, in selecting or placing an individual, the grantee or the grantee’s designee (such as a site sponsor) reviewed and considered the background check’s results. California law (Penal Code Sections 11140-11144) makes it a misdemeanor for those records to be shown or given to anyone not authorized to see them. The threat of criminal charges applies not only to the program but also to the person requesting to see the records.

Based on all of this CV advises our programs to:

1. Consider the need to conduct a background check based upon the member activities, specifically contact with youth or vulnerable populations. Fingerprinting and background check fees are allowable costs to your AmeriCorps budget. Please contact your program associate if you have questions.
2. Maintain the records of the background checks as retention of the records is not prohibited by state law;

3. Not show the records to any program officer, either from the Commission or the Corporation, or any auditor absent demonstration of statutory authority , case law or a court order.

CV has created a form to assist you in tracking these very sensitive documents. Please visit Grantee Central for the current version.

Because the eligibility of individuals with criminal records has not been restricted, programs must make case-by-case determinations. However, if your program provides service in particularly sensitive areas, such as working with young children, you should consider whether the participation of individuals with certain criminal backgrounds would have a significant negative impact on the physical or psychological health of either members or individuals served. Similarly, programs should consider carefully the impact of participation by an individual convicted of a violent felony or an offense related to the project activities (for example, someone with a burglary record where the program repairs the homes of elderly residents). The same recommendations apply for someone adjudicated as a juvenile offender.

Members without High School Diploma or Equivalency

Individuals who do not have a high school diploma or equivalent upon entering AmeriCorps must agree in writing before enrolling in the program to obtain a high school diploma or its equivalent prior to using the education award, unless the program has conducted an educational assessment that indicates the member is incapable of obtaining a high school diploma or its equivalent. The grant provisions and the regulations (45 C.F.R. § 2522.200) list exceptions to this requirement. If the member successfully completes the term of service, he or she is eligible for an education award, which he or she may use after obtaining a high school diploma or equivalent.

For members who are school dropouts, programs must provide support services to help them get a high school diploma or equivalent certificate before exiting the program. Programs also may want to provide college readiness programs for members going on to higher education. Both high school/GED programs and college readiness programs can be integrated effectively with service-learning curricula. Members must have their high school diploma or equivalent, or obtain a waiver, to access their education awards

Employee Displacement

Programs may not permit a member to fill in for an absent employee. By law, members may not under any circumstances perform services, duties, or activities that had been assigned to an employee or to an employee who has recently resigned or has been discharged. Programs

may not use a member in a way that will displace an employee or position or infringe on an employee's promotional opportunities.

A detailed list of prohibitions related to employee displacement is included in the Corporation's regulations (45 C.F.R. § 2540.100) and your grant provisions.

Programs may not select an employee, or previous employee, as an AmeriCorps member as described on the AmeriCorps Grant Provision §31c. If the program receives an application from a current or former employee, and wishes to select the individual as a member, the program must request a waiver from the CNCS AmeriCorps Program Office demonstrating that the member will be doing activities and serving in a capacity distinct from his or her prior employment.

While the prohibition on employee displacement does not apply to employment after a member's term of service ends, programs should not encourage members to cut their term of service short to become full-time employees of the program. This does not promote the ethic of service, hampers the program's ability to meet its objectives, and potentially makes the member ineligible to receive an education award.

Finally, while the Corporation will not apply the prohibition on employee displacement to situations in which a currently serving member wishes to work part-time for the host sites or legal applicants in a different capacity. We suggest talking with your state service commission to clarify any uncertainties. Host sites or legal applicant must be aware that in hiring a currently serving member you may run afoul of federal or state wage and hour laws and be liable for paying minimum wage and time and a half overtime. You should check with the appropriate wage and hour authorities in your state to make that determination.

Member Screening

Your first screening

You need to consider who will have primary responsibility for member recruitment for your program. Anyone who will ultimately be involved with a potential member should be part of the screening process in some way. You may want to consider the practices listed below that have been helpful to other programs. Though these are not mandatory, they have been helpful in finding members that have a strong commitment to service and will stay with the program for their complete term of service.

- ★ Present a clear picture of what prospective members can expect.
- ★ Select members first, then tour the sites. Members can select their top choices.
- ★ Conduct a budgeting assessment for the applicant to insure the member will successfully live on their stipend.

- ★ Second year members can also be helpful providing testimonials and detailed information about the service activities, perhaps allowing prospective members to shadow members in the actual setting.
- ★ Boot camp – an induction process for three days so that members can see if this is what they want. This can be used as team building exercise and also serve as a preliminary orientation to the program and its activities.

During the interview some things to look for include a prospective member's commitment to service and a full term of service. Be sure to fully disclose the annual timeline, program expectations and details concerning what is involved in the service opportunities you have available.

After your initial screening, it is critical to have your sites involved in member selection and placement. This also helps insure a good match between prospective members and sites where they will serve thus maximizing the potential for retention.

Accommodating Members with Disabilities

You are urged to reach out to members who can contribute a diverse set of perceptions, skills, and life experiences to the program team.

In all cases, your selection process must be based on the qualifications of the applicants and whether or not they can perform the essential project activities, with or without reasonable accommodation of their mental or physical disabilities. Programs and activities must be accessible to persons with disabilities, and you must provide reasonable accommodation to the known mental or physical disabilities of otherwise qualified members, service recipients, applicants, and program staff.

You must make all selections and project assignments without regard to the need to provide reasonable accommodation. You are not asked to enroll individuals who are unqualified or who pose a direct threat to the health or safety of others [that cannot be eliminated through reasonable accommodation], nor are you required to make accommodations that are unduly burdensome or will alter your program design fundamentally. However, you must prove and document any such findings or decisions.

Once an individual requests an accommodation, you should evaluate your ability to provide that accommodation. The first step is to talk to the person – find out what functional limitations exist and what essential functions need to be accomplished or what barrier exists to participation in the program or activity.

In many cases individuals will know what they need and how to secure it. In some cases, individuals will not be certain what they will need. There are several resources that you can

call upon to assist you and the individual in evaluating appropriate and effective accommodations.

It is always a good idea to contact technical assistance resources when an individual requests an accommodation that involves getting or modifying equipment, or involves structural changes. There are resources that are expertly qualified to assist you.

- ★ The Disability and Business Technical Assistance Centers (DBTACs) are a federally funded resource that can assist you. They can be reached at (800) 949-9232 (voice/TTY).
- ★ The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) is another excellent resource that is available to you at no cost. JAN can be reached at (800) 526-7234 (voice/TTY).
- ★ Independent Living Centers (ILCs) are federally funded and located across the country and can provide you with assistance.

These resources are knowledgeable of effective, efficient accommodations. Often they can identify accommodations that are far less costly than – and often more effective than persons who are not experts in accommodation can identify.

Provide accommodations: Financial or administrative burden

You may receive requests for accommodations that you believe are unduly disruptive to your program or are too expensive. Under the Rehabilitation Act and the terms of your grant or agreement with the Corporation, you must provide accommodation, upon request by a qualified individual with disabilities, unless doing so is an undue financial or administrative burden to your program. This is a very high standard. Not being easily achievable does not meet this standard. Being difficult to achieve, time-consuming, or costly, do not meet this standard. What affirmatively is the standard – what is too much to ask? In addition, there are many factors that go into evaluating the obligation to provide accommodations.

Undue administrative burden means the accommodation will alter the fundamental nature of your program. For example, adjustment of hours is often a form of reasonable accommodation. However, you must carefully consider the circumstances and the legal requirements when adjusting hours for participants. AmeriCorps State/National programs have statutory requirements regarding service hours, and changes to hours that violate these requirements "alter the fundamental nature of the program." Therefore, these changes are not required for reasonable accommodation and providing them may violate the Corporation's statute.

You must first determine if your program has consistently applied these requirements to all your participants. Strict adherence to the legal requirements to deny a person an

accommodation for his or her disability when flexibility is allowed for others is discrimination because of disability.

If consistently applied, the following scenarios would alter the fundamental nature of the program:

- a full-time AmeriCorps State/National/NCCC member who is not required to serve 1700 hrs (or a higher minimum established by the program);
- an AmeriCorps VISTA who is not available for service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, in the same manner as other AmeriCorps VISTAs at that site or within that state; and
- an AmeriCorps member who extends the time within which to complete the requisite number of hours. NOTE: There are ways to work around a fundamental alteration in the 12-month completion requirement. If a person with a disability needs time off for extensive medical treatments, hospitalization, etc. or is unable to serve full time for a period, options are:
 - They can be put on a non-disciplinary suspension for the period, with that time added to the end of the current service period. This allows the person to complete the full term of service and obtain the education award. It makes no difference if this puts their completion date after the end of the grant cycle. However, the participant cannot receive a living allowance during this period.
 - There may be circumstances under which they can be converted to part-time status. This is dependent on program design and may affect the individual's member benefits.
 - They can be released for compelling personal circumstances. This allows them to receive a prorated education award.
 - Undue financial burden considers many factors, including:
 - (The overall size of your entire organization (not just your national service or volunteer program) – numbers of employees and participants; number and type of facilities; and size of budget.
 - (b) The type of your operation, including the composition and structure of your entire organization's work force and service force.
 - (c) The nature and cost of the accommodation needed.

In all cases, if you fail to provide a reasonable accommodation when requested by a qualified individual with disabilities and claim undue burden, the onus is on you to fully justify your undue burden claim.

In some cases, there are funds available from the State service commissions to assist you in paying for accommodations. These funds may not be used to assist you in meeting basic accessibility and accommodation requirements, but they can be used to make your program more accessible than the minimum requirements mandate. Therefore, if providing an accommodation would be an undue financial burden for your organization, these funds may be available. Contact your State service commission for more information.

Member Enrollment and Retention

AmeriCorps members are the heart and soul of your program so retaining members in your program is one of the most important things you can do as a program manager. Your program contract language explicitly states that your program budget is dependent upon maintaining your member slots. The majority of your program budget is dedicated members, so it is important to set up proper systems to maintain CNCS' expected 90% enrollment and 90% retention rates.

Member Documentation: Member Files

Please refer to Member File Checklist on Grantee Central

Purpose of a Member Contract

The member contract is the document that will explain to a member his or her responsibilities and rights as an AmeriCorps member in a specific program. To provide clarity and prevent subsequent member issues, program directors should walk through the contract during orientation and have members sign their contract. A copy of each member's signed contract must be kept in the member's file and recorded in the Member Information Profile in WBRs.

Required Components of a Member Contract

Members receive a great quantity of material when they begin their service. The member contract is considered to represent the foundation of their commitment to service. Thus, it is important that program directors spend time on the contract and set aside time for members to review and understand it. According to the Federal Regulations/Provisions, AmeriCorps programs must require that members sign contracts that, at a minimum, stipulate the following:

- A. The minimum number of service hours and other requirements (as developed by the Program) necessary to successfully complete the term of service and to be eligible for the education award;
- B. Acceptable conduct;
- C. Prohibited activities, including those specified in the regulations;

- D. Requirements under the Drug-Free Workplace Act (41 U.S.C. 701 et seq.);
- E. Suspension and termination rules;
- F. The specific circumstances under which a member may be released for cause;
- G. The position description;
- H. Grievance procedures; and
- I. Other requirements as established by the Program.

Prohibited Member Activities

There are certain activities—including lobbying, political, religious, or advocacy activities—that AmeriCorps members and staff may not perform in the course of their duties, while charging time to the AmeriCorps program, or at the request of program staff. Furthermore, members and staff may not engage in any conduct in a manner that would associate the national service program or the Corporation with the prohibited activities. Programs must become familiar with the specific prohibitions described in the Corporation’s formal regulations and the grant provisions outline here for your convenience (§ **2520.65**)

(a) While charging time to the AmeriCorps program, accumulating service or training hours, or otherwise performing activities supported by the AmeriCorps program or the Corporation, staff and members may not engage in the following activities:

- (1) Attempting to influence legislation;
- (2) Organizing or engaging in protests, petitions, boycotts, or strikes;
- (3) Assisting, promoting, or deterring union organizing;
- (4) Impairing existing contracts for services or collective bargaining agreements;
- (5) Engaging in partisan political activities, or other activities designed to influence the outcome of an election to any public office;
- (6) Participating in, or endorsing, events or activities that are likely to include advocacy for or against political parties, political platforms, political candidates, proposed legislation, or elected officials;
- (7) Engaging in religious instruction, conducting worship services, providing instruction as part of a program that includes mandatory religious instruction or worship, constructing or operating facilities devoted to religious instruction or worship, maintaining facilities primarily or inherently devoted to religious instruction or worship, or engaging in any form of religious proselytizing;
- (8) Providing a direct benefit to—

- (i) A business organized for profit;
- (ii) A labor union;
- (iii) A partisan political organization;
- (iv) A nonprofit organization that fails to comply with the restrictions contained in section 501(c)(3) of the Internal

Revenue Code of 1986 except that nothing in this section shall be construed to prevent participants from engaging in

advocacy activities undertaken at their own initiative; and

- (v) An organization engaged in the religious activities described in paragraph (g) of this section, unless Corporation assistance is not used to support those religious activities; and

(9) Such other activities as the Corporation may prohibit.

(b) Individuals may exercise their rights as private citizens and may participate in the activities listed above on their initiative, on non-AmeriCorps time, and using non-Corporation funds. Individuals should not wear the AmeriCorps logo while doing so.

Fundraising Guidelines

In general, AmeriCorps members cannot assist their organizations with major fundraising efforts. However, Corporation policy permits some limited activities related to fundraising by AmeriCorps members to the extent that such activities:

- ★ provide immediate and direct support to a specific and direct service activity;
- ★ fall within the program's approved direct service performance measures;
- ★ are not the primary activity of the program;
- ★ and do not involve more than 10% of service hours for any member.

For example, members may:

- ★ solicit supplies from local businesses for a direct service project—e.g., solicit several cans of paint from a store near a work site to meet a need.
- ★ organize an occasional “serv-a-thon” in which members recruit individuals to obtain sponsors in advance of an approved direct service event.

Members may not:

- ★ prepare any part of a grant proposal or perform other fundraising functions to help you achieve your match requirement, or to pay your organization's general operating expenses.

Grievance Policy Guideline

You must explain to your members the grievance procedures of your program and have a signed copy acknowledging the member's understanding of these procedures in their file.

Overview

If informal efforts to resolve disputes are unsuccessful, AmeriCorps members, labor unions, and other interested individuals may seek resolution through a grievance procedure. AmeriCorps grievance procedures may include an optional component-alternative dispute resolution. The procedures must include a hearing and binding arbitration.

The grievance procedure is not designed to address all issues. Allegations of fraud and criminal activity must be reported immediately to the Corporation's Inspector General. Allegations of discrimination should be directed in writing to the Corporation's Office of Equal Opportunity. However, it is designed to address most disputes between members and their programs, as well as grievances from labor unions and other interested individuals.

Grievance procedure requirements are published in the Corporation's statute (42 U.S.C. § 12636) and regulations (45 C.F.R. § 2540.230). They are summarized as follows:

Required grievance procedures

By law, a program must provide a grievance procedure to resolve disputes filed by AmeriCorps members, labor unions, and other interested persons (including AmeriCorps member applicants). The grievance procedure must include a hearing and binding arbitration.

Grievance hearing: By law, programs must provide an opportunity for a grievance hearing, provided that a request is made within one year of the matter at issue. Hearings must be held no later than 30 calendar days after the filing of the grievance, and a decision must be made no later than 60 calendar days after the filing of the grievance. Hearings must be conducted by a person who has not participated in any previous decisions concerning the issue in dispute.

Binding arbitration: By law, programs must provide an opportunity for binding arbitration in the event a grievance hearing decision is adverse to the aggrieved party or if no decision is made within 60 days of the filing of the grievance. The arbitrator must be independent and selected by agreement of the parties. If the parties cannot agree on an arbitrator, the Corporation's Chief Executive Officer will appoint one within 15 calendar days after receiving a request from one of the parties.

An arbitration proceeding must be held no later than 45 calendar days after the request for arbitration, or no later than 30 calendar days after the appointment of an arbitrator by the

Corporation's CEO. An arbitration decision must be made no later than 30 calendar days after the commencement of the arbitration proceeding.

The cost of arbitration must be divided evenly between the parties, unless the aggrieved party prevails, in which case the program must pay the total cost of the proceeding as well as the prevailing party's attorneys' fees. A law suit to enforce an arbitration award may be brought in any federal district court having jurisdiction over the parties.

An example grievance procedure is included on page 32.

Timeline for Grievance Procedures

The following are the timeframes that must be addressed in any AmeriCorps grievance procedure. Not every requirement is shown, but all major milestones are noted.

- ★ within 1 year of alleged occurrence: GRIEVANCE FILED
- ★ within 30 days of filing of grievance: HEARING
- ★ within 60 days of filing of grievance: DECISION
- ★ if decision is adverse to grievant, or 60 days after filing grievance if no decision has been reached: REQUEST FOR BINDING ARBITRATION
- ★ within 45 days after request for arbitration, or within 30 days after CEO appoints arbitrator: BINDING ARBITRATION HEARING within 30 days of arbitration hearing: BINDING ARBITRATION DECISION

Benefits

Living Allowance

The National and Community Service Act of 1990, as amended, requires an AmeriCorps program to provide its full-time members with a living allowance "in an amount equal to or greater than the average annual subsistence allowance provided to VISTA volunteers" (§42 U.S.C. § 12594(a)(1)). Requirements related to member living allowances and benefits are in 45 C.F.R. §§2522.240 and 2522.250. In addition, the following apply:

Living Allowance Distribution. A living allowance is not a wage. Programs must not pay a living allowance on an hourly basis. Programs should pay the living allowance in regular increments, such as weekly or bi-weekly, paying an increased increment only on the basis of increased living expenses such as food, housing, or transportation. Payments should not fluctuate based on the number of hours served in a particular time period, and must cease when a member concludes a term of service.

If a member serves 1700 hours but is permitted to conclude a term of service before the originally agreed upon date, the program may not provide a “lump sum” payment to the member. Similarly, if a member enrolls after the program’s start date, the program must provide regular living allowance payments from the member’s start date and may not increase the member’s living allowance incremental payment or provide a lump sum to “make up” any missed payments.

Waiving the Living Allowance. If a living allowance is paid, a member may waive all or part of the payment of a living allowance if he or she believes his or her public assistance may be lost or decreased because of the living allowance. Even if a member waives his or her right to receive the living allowance, it is possible—depending on the specific public assistance program rules—that the amount of the living allowance that the member is eligible to receive will be deemed available. A member who has waived the living allowance may revoke the waiver at any time and may begin receiving the living allowance prospective to the revocation date; the member may not receive any portion of the living allowance accrued during the waiver period.

Generally, all full-time members must receive a living allowance between \$11,100 and \$22,200. The Corporation will fund only 85 percent of the minimum living allowance amount, or \$9,435 per full-time member. Programs that want to provide a living allowance in excess of \$11,100 must provide all funds over \$9,435 from non-federal sources. Programs may choose to pay a living allowance to part-time members. The Corporation will fund 85 percent of the requested amount up to the pro-rated amount required for full-time members. Education Awards programs are encouraged, but not required, to provide a living allowance to members.

Taxes and Insurance

Liability Insurance. Programs must have adequate general liability coverage for the organization, employees and members, including coverage of members engaged in on- and off-site project activities. See Chapter 3.

FICA (Social Security and Medicare taxes). Unless a program obtains a ruling from the Social Security Administration or the Internal Revenue Service that specifically exempts its AmeriCorps members from FICA requirements, you must pay FICA for any member receiving a living allowance; programs must withhold 7.65% from the member’s living allowance.

Income Taxes. Programs must withhold Federal personal income taxes from member living allowances, requiring each member to complete a W-4 form at the beginning of the term of service and providing a W-2 form at the close of the tax year. Programs must comply with any applicable state or local tax requirements.

Unemployment Insurance. The U.S. Department of Labor ruled on April 20, 1995 that federal unemployment compensation law does not require coverage for members because no employer-employee relationship exists. In 2000, California State Law provided AmeriCorps members with an exemption from the California wage and hour law.

Worker's Compensation. California State Law required that AmeriCorps programs provide Worker's Compensation Insurance for AmeriCorps members. Organizations that are exempt from Worker's Compensation, but that are operating AmeriCorps programs, need to cover their members for on-the-job injuries through their existing liability coverage or a new policy purchased specifically for the AmeriCorps program activities.

Health Insurance

Health insurance must be made available to full-time members. If you have less-than-full-time members serving full time (i.e. members serving a half-time position in six months), and would like to provide health insurance, you may do so by working directly with your carrier, without prior Corporation approval. If your program already carries minimum benefits as defined in provision 11.E and at a reasonable cost, they may use existing policies to cover members. If programs wish to use their existing policies, they must send a copy of the policy and a summary of its coverage and cost to commission.

If you do not have a current policy that carries the minimum health care benefits, you may use any health insurance policy for AmeriCorps members that meets the Corporation's requirements. The Corporation will pay up to 85 percent of the cost if your policy meets our minimum health care benefits and is not excessive in cost. All health care premium costs must be approved in the grant and included in the budget.

AmeriCorps Education Awards Only (EAO) programs are not required to provide health benefits to members.

Health care insurance for members on Medicaid

You must provide health care coverage to all full-time AmeriCorps even if they are eligible for Medicaid. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has taken the position that members receiving Medicaid have coverage available to them through AmeriCorps. Because Medicaid "wraps around" other available health care coverage, Medicaid will pick up only those costs that are not covered under the AmeriCorps policy. Members who remain on TANF will continue to receive Medicaid for their dependents. Members who lose TANF due to the living allowance usually can continue to receive extended Medicaid coverage for their dependents for up to one year.

Program applicants should consult with their caseworkers before enrolling in AmeriCorps.

Childcare Assistance

Eligible full-time members may receive subsidized child care through AmeriCorps*CARE while they are participating in national service. AmeriCorps*CARE child care benefits are administered through the offices of the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRRA). Program directors, AmeriCorps members, and child care providers may contact AmeriCorps*CARE at (800) 570-4543, through NACCRRA's website at www.naccrra.org, or by mail at AmeriCorps*CARE c/o NACCRRA 1319 F Street, NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20004.

In order to be eligible for the benefits, the member's family must be income-eligible and the child care provider must be legally qualified in the state. AmeriCorps*CARE will reimburse qualified child care providers up to 100% of the current local market rate for child care services. Reimbursement rates and income eligibility are based on locally established guidelines under the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), a federally funded program administered by each state.

Parents are responsible for registration, late, and all other miscellaneous fees incurred by the child's acceptance, enrollment, or participation in the child care program.

AmeriCorps Education Award Programs are not required to provide child care.

Qualified child care providers

To qualify for reimbursement through AmeriCorps*CARE, a child care provider must be legally qualified under the state's CCDF guidelines. Each state has its own qualification criteria. Reimbursements will not be made to ineligible providers.

You may contact AmeriCorps CARE for technical assistance in determining member eligibility, provider qualification, and for information about child care rates by calling (800) 570-4543 from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. EST.

Eligibility for child care benefits

Full-time AmeriCorps members are eligible for child care benefits if they:

- ★ are parents or legal guardians of dependents under 13 years of age, who reside with them;
- ★ need child care paid for, in order to participate;
- ★ are not receiving child care from another available source at time of acceptance into the program; and
- ★ have a family income that does not exceed the income level established by the state's CCDF guidelines.

Members are not eligible to receive child care benefits through AmeriCorps CARE while receiving other child care subsidies.

Part-time members and child care benefits

Although no portion of child care expenses for part-time members may be paid from Corporation funds, programs may choose to provide child care to part-time members from other sources. With Corporation approval, part-time members serving full-time hours for a sustained period of time (such as a full-time summer project) may receive child care benefits through AmeriCorps*CARE, but this extension of child care benefits must be approved in the grant or via prior written approval from the Corporation's Office of Grant Management.

Half-time members may be eligible for child care subsidies available through state-administered child care assistance programs. Various state child care programs are also available to families who are on TANF, "at risk" of going on TANF, or losing TANF due to the AmeriCorps living allowance. AmeriCorps member eligibility does not guarantee availability of child care assistance in any particular state. Local agencies such as the child care resource and referral agency in your area can help part-time members research information about these programs. You may also contact the state's child care coordinator (usually housed in the state Department of Education, Social Services, Human Services, Social Insurance, or similar agency) for guidance.

Eligibility for Food Stamps

Federal law requires that AmeriCorps State and National living allowance be disregarded in determining eligibility for Federal or federally-assisted programs based on need, such as Food Stamps. When communicating with local food Stamp offices, be sure to clarify that your members are funded under Title 1 of the National and Community Service Act of 1990 (42 U.S.C. 12501 et seq.), not Title 1 of the Domestic Volunteer Service Act of 1973 (42 U.S.C. 4950 et seq.).

Family and Medical Leave.

The Corporation's Regulations at 45 C.F.R. §2540.220 describe the circumstances under which AmeriCorps members can take family and medical leave in accordance with the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA). However, family and medical leave does not count toward the requisite service hours and members may not receive a living allowance during this period.

At the program's discretion, temporary leave may also be authorized for the reasons allowed under FMLA to AmeriCorps members who do not otherwise meet the eligibility requirements for FMLA leave as described in the regulations. If temporary leave is appropriate, grantees have the flexibility to determine the duration of the absence for up to 12 weeks, and may choose to continue providing health benefits to the member during the period of absence.

The length of the leave must be based on two considerations: (1) the circumstances of the situation; and (2) the impact of the absence on the member's service experience and on the overall program. If the disruption would seriously compromise the member's service experience or the quality of the program as a whole, then the grantee may offer the member the option of rejoining the program in the next class or completely withdrawing from the program.

MEMBER MANAGEMENT: TRAINING

Member Training Plans. Members must receive an initial member orientation and training that includes information regarding the community in which they serve, the history of national service, expectations of members, and specific training to prepare for the service they will provide. Whether member activities involve tutoring children in reading, housing provision and improvement, or neighborhood/community enhancement, members need to learn the basic skills and technical information associated with good practice before they perform service. In addition, members must receive ongoing training that supplements their initial orientation and provides added depth to their service experience. Training that must be included in the training plan:

- *Member Orientation* – history of national service, introduction to AmeriCorps, member contract, payroll/benefits, member expectations, key staff and other introductions, etc.
- *Initial Member Training* – community overview, design of program, program-specific training related to member service activities, team building, diversity training, etc.
- *Site Specific Orientation* – overview of placement site, introduction of key contacts, policies and procedures for placement site;
- *Ongoing Training* – additional program-specific training related to member service activities, volunteer recruitment and support training, ethic of service/civic responsibility, etc.
- *Life After AmeriCorps* – training to help members transition from the AmeriCorps experience, including resume writing, interview skills, non-profit and public sector job resources, graduate school programs, using the education award, etc. Resources to assist with this training are available from the Corporation; and,
- *Ethic of Service/Civic Responsibility* – All members must participate in specialized training to develop a lifelong ethic of service and civic responsibility. Please see below for more information regarding requirements

Other Member Training Elements. Programs may also wish to include the following elements in their plans for ongoing training:

- *Conflict Management* – Training for effectively managing conflict;
- *Support Services* – Programs are **required** to assist members who have not completed high school in earning the equivalent of a high school diploma (GED). Programs are encouraged to support GED efforts that are clearly linked to higher education opportunities.
- *Accommodations* – Programs are encouraged to identify types of accommodations and universal design features they plan to employ, and ways in which they will respond to requests for accommodations;
- *Communication Skills* – Skill development that assists members in becoming more effective communicators;
- *Teambuilding* – Activities that help build a team environment and esprit de corps among members with diverse attitudes, knowledge, skills and life experience;
- *Leadership Development* – Training that assists members in developing leadership skills;
- *Diversity Training* – Training that helps members appreciate the differences among and between team members and the larger community;
- *First Aid/CPR* – Programs are encouraged to train members in standard first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR);
- *CERT Training* – CV strongly encourages programs to provide this training which includes basic first aid and CPR;
- *Career Exploration* – Training and education that allows members to explore career opportunities in areas such as child development, teaching, public health, or public safety.

Training Plan

To help create an esprit de corps for members, your program is encouraged to plan on the basis of “classes” of members who begin and “graduate” from their terms of service. Terms of service should generally begin in June, September, and/or January. Having classes allows you to provide pre-service orientation as well as other training necessary for members to effectively engage in their service activities. Up to 20% of member service hours can be spent in training. Some members may require more training than others due to their service assignment, so the 20% is not a per person figure but rather an average for the entire program. If you lose AmeriCorps members between classes, the Corporation encourages

programs to fill those slots with members who have had appropriate orientation and training prior to beginning their term of service.

As you develop a training plan for your program, consider at least two elements: (1) formal training, usually provided annually and (2) informal, training and technical assistance on an as needed basis. Annual training often includes the launch or beginning ceremony, orientation to national service, skills training to allow members to effectively fulfill their position description, and team building. Training is often front loaded in a member's term of service to allow members to serve effectively and efficiently.

The "as needed" training and technical assistance (T/TA) is of necessity more informal and flexible. Program staff have found thought that regular check-ins with members are essential to identifying individual member needs so that appropriate assistance can be offered.

Ethic of service

To help create an esprit de corps for members, programs are encouraged to plan on the basis of "classes" of members who begin and "graduate" from their terms of service. Terms of service should generally begin in June, September, and/or January. If programs lose AmeriCorps members between classes, the Corporation encourages programs to fill those slots with members who have had appropriate orientation and training prior to beginning their term of service.

Appropriate opening ceremonies, including the administration of the AmeriCorps Pledge, are important for all members. Programs should also arrange for members to participate in other joint activities such as service days (such as the Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service) and conferences arranged by state commissions or by the Corporation.

The Corporation also asks grantees to identify their program as part of the national service network and as a program in which AmeriCorps members serve. This can be done through the use of AmeriCorps logos, common application materials, and other means. Grantees are not required to call their programs AmeriCorps programs, though all may use the AmeriCorps name along with their own program's name.

To help develop an ethic of lifetime service, programs are asked to provide opportunities for members to consider the meaning of the following line from the AmeriCorps pledge: "I will carry this commitment with me this year and beyond..." Many programs or states hold continuation of service conferences toward the end of AmeriCorps members' terms of service. The Corporation encourages all programs to arrange such opportunities.

Programs are required to provide members with the training, skills, and knowledge they need to perform well in their assigned service project. Training should be an ongoing part of your program. You should use service experiences to help members improve their skills,

internalize project goals and increase their insight. In addition, training should reinforce AmeriCorps information, including prohibited activities.

Programs as a whole must allocate at least 80 percent of the required participation to direct service activities and no more than 20 percent of the aggregate required service hours to education, training, and other non-direct service activities. Training hours must be tracked separately on member timesheets. This rule applies to programs as a whole and not to individuals. Thus, there can be minor differences among members in how much time they spend in non-direct service activities. However, members should not be assigned to administrative duties unless incidental to the service activities.

Examples of training for assigned service activities:

- ★ skills training (such as tutoring, mentoring, giving immunizations, etc.)
- ★ working with volunteers
- ★ cross-cultural sensitivity
- ★ team building

Examples of training to develop members (these are suggested topics—each program will determine their own training needs):

- ★ civic engagement
- ★ leadership
- ★ cross-cultural sensitivity
- ★ communication
- ★ accommodation of persons with disabilities
- ★ conflict resolution
- ★ resume writing
- ★ CPR/first aid
- ★ life after AmeriCorps

Orientation, On-going Training and Support

Orientation

Member orientations are necessary for preparing your members to begin their terms of service. In order to facilitate this learning process, programs are strongly encouraged to present materials in multiple formats. In particular, program rules, including prohibited activities, should be presented orally as well as in writing, with opportunities for discussion

and questions. Programs determine the needed time allotted for orientation as well as any ongoing training.

Core topics for initial member orientation should include, at a minimum:

- ★ **National service: the big picture** (Give an overview of the history and nationwide importance of national service by reviewing:
 - ★ The history of service in America
 - ★ The AmeriCorps network of over 900 programs and more than 50,000 members
 - ★ A discussion of the AmeriCorps ethic
 - ★ The importance of getting things done
 - ★ The meaning of community
 - ★ The doors of opportunity that will open through service
 - ★ The responsibilities that individuals have to themselves, their families, their community, and the nation

Program rules, regulations, and benefits

Review the member contract and discuss sections such as:

- ★ Benefits
 - ★ Living allowance
 - ★ Drug Free Workplace Act
 - ★ Sexual harassment and other discrimination issues
 - ★ Grievance procedure
 - ★ Safety protocol
 - ★ Prohibited activities
 - ★ Rules of conduct
 - ★ Suspension
 - ★ Making up missed service hours

Program operating policies

In addition members should understand program operating policies such as:

- Timesheets (signed by member and supervisor)

- Travel policies
- Expense reimbursement
- ★ Staff and member roles
- ★ Performance measures
- ★ Data collection
- ★ Background information about the community or natural environment.

AmeriCorps Pledge

A nice way to solidify members' commitment is to ask them to take the AmeriCorps pledge. Many programs make this a public ceremony involve in elected officials and commissioners to ...this induction of members could formally launch your program.

I will get things done for America—to make our people safer, smarter, and healthier.

I will bring Americans together to strengthen our communities.

Faced with apathy, I will take action.

Faced with conflict, I will seek common ground.

Faced with adversity, I will persevere.

I will carry this commitment with me this year and beyond.

I am an AmeriCorps member, and I will get things done.

Copies of the AmeriCorps pledge, suitable for distributing to members as a certificate, are available from Mississippi Industries for the Blind.

Ongoing Training

Ongoing training supports the member throughout their term of service. 20% of member time is spend developing skills and knowledge and could occur weekly or biweekly. You and your partners should determine when specific skills or topics are appropriate delivered within the training calendar. Site specific training should be coordinated locally. The plan should allow for member input for additional skills they may request during their term of service

Evaluating Member Performance

Many new program managers are surprised how much time it takes to supervise members. Many of the issues that can arise can be complex and require unique skills on your part. In addition to the accountability of the grant you are also a counselor and advocate for your members. Many program directors consider a best practice to provide consistent and frequent feedback to members. In addition to documenting what you see members doing, it is also important to solicit input from their direct supervisor. This can avoid any potential issues

that can arise when the program director is under the impression that the member is performing adequately but s/he is having problems at the site. Obtaining quality feedback from the supervisor that sees the member the most will likely be more accurate and ultimately benefit the member the most.

According to the provisions, your program must conduct and keep a record of at least a midterm and end-of-term written evaluation of each member's performance for Full and Half-Time members and an end-of-term written evaluation for less than Half-time members. The evaluation should focus on such factors as:

- ★ Whether the member has completed the required number of hours;
- ★ Whether the member has satisfactorily completed assignments; and
- ★ Whether the member has met other performance criteria that were clearly communicated at the beginning of the term of service.

Managing Members: Day to Day Operations

Documenting Member Hours

Programs must keep time and attendance records on all AmeriCorps members in order to document their eligibility for in-service and post-service benefits. Time and attendance records must be signed and dated both by the member and by an individual with oversight responsibilities for the member.

Member Classification

AmeriCorps members are not employees of the Program or of the federal government. The definition of “participant” in the National and Community Service Act of 1990 as amended applies to AmeriCorps members. As such, “a participant (member) shall not be considered to be an employee of the Program in which the participant (member) is enrolled” (42 U.S.C. 12511(17) (B)). Moreover, members are not allowed to perform an employee’s duties or otherwise displace employees.

For the limited purposes of the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993, the member may be considered an eligible employee of the project sponsor. The Family and Medical Leave Act's requirements as they apply to AmeriCorps Programs are contained in 45 C.F.R. 2540.220(b).

Member Enrollment Procedures

An individual is enrolled as an AmeriCorps member when all of the following have occurred:

- He or she has signed a member contract;
- The program has verified the individual's eligibility to serve;

- The individual has begun a term of service; and
 - The program has approved the member enrollment form in WBRS.
- Prior to enrolling a member in AmeriCorps, programs make commitments to individuals to serve.
 - A commitment is defined as signing a member contract with an individual or otherwise entering into a legally enforceable commitment as determined by state law.
 - Within 30 calendar days of entering into a commitment with an individual, the program must notify the Corporation of the commitment via WBRS by enrolling the individual as a member.

Within 30 calendar days of the member's starting service, the program must complete and approve the enrollment form in WBRS. If a commitment does not result in a member actually being enrolled, the program must cancel the commitment in WBRS within 30 calendar days of the member's expected start date. If the program does not complete an enrollment within 30 days of the member's expected start date, the program will receive notification that the timeframe has expired. The program will then have 15 calendar days to complete the enrollment before the commitment is removed from WBRS.

Failure to notify the Corporation of member commitments or enrollments within these timeframes may result in sanctions to the program, up to and including, reducing the number of member positions or suspending or terminating the grant.

Notice to the Corporation's National Service Trust. The program must notify the Corporation's National Service Trust within 30 days upon entering into a commitment with an individual to serve; a member's enrollment in WBRS; and completion of, lengthy or indefinite suspension from, or release from, a term of service. Lengthy or indefinite suspension of service is defined as an extended period during which the member is not serving, nor accumulating service hours or receiving AmeriCorps benefits, because it is unclear when the member might return to the Program.

The program also must notify the Trust when a change in a member's status is approved and changed (i.e. from full-time to less than full-time or vice versa). Failure to report such changes within 30 days may result in sanctions to the grantee, up to and including, suspension or termination. Grantees properly utilizing WBRS meet notification requirements when they use that system to inform the Corporation within the approved time frames. Any questions regarding the Trust should be directed to the Trust Office.

CHANGES IN MEMBER STATUS

Circumstances may arise within a program that necessitate changing the type of unfilled AmeriCorps member positions awarded to a grantee or sub-grantee, or changing the term of service of a currently enrolled member. Note that once a member is exited with a partial education award, the remaining portion of that education award is not available for use.

Any change of member status that:

1. Necessitates a change in the number of member service year positions in the grant, or
2. Changes the funding amount of the grant

requires prior written approval from the Corporation's Office of Grants Management.

Changing Slot Types (unfilled positions). Grantees or sub-grantees may change the type of slots awarded to their program without prior approval from the Corporation's AmeriCorps Program Office if:

1. The change does not increase the total MSYs authorized in the Notice of Grant Award (e.g. one half-time position cannot be changed to one full-time position),
2. The change does not increase the amount of the education award (effective November 14, 2006).

To request a change in slot type, the grantee must make a slot conversion and/or correction request in WBRS and forward it to the Corporation for approval.

Changing a Term of Service (filled positions). Changes in terms of service may not result in an increased number of MSYs for the program.

Full-time. State Commissions and Parent Organizations may authorize or approve occasional changes of currently enrolled full-time members to less than full-time members within the first 90 days of the member's service. Impact on program quality should be factored into approval of requests. The Corporation will not cover health care or childcare costs for less than full-time members. It is not allowable to transfer currently enrolled full-time members to a less than full-time status simply to provide a less than full-time education award. A Change of Status form must be completed in WBRS and forwarded to the Corporation within 30 days.

Less than Full-time. Changing less than full-time members to full-time is discouraged because it is very difficult to facilitate, unless done very early in the member's term of service. State Commissions and Parent Organizations may authorize or approve such changes so long as they are within the first 90 days of the member's service, and the current budget can accommodate such changes. Programs must keep in mind that a member's minimum 1700 hours must be completed within 12 months of the member's original start

date. A Change of Status form must be completed in WBRS and forwarded to the Corporation within 30 days.

Refilling Slots. Eligible AmeriCorps*State and National programs that have fully enrolled their awarded member slots are allowed to replace any member who terminates service before completing 30 percent of his/her term (effective May 17, 2007) provided that the member who terminates is not eligible for and does not receive a pro-rated education award. Programs may not refill the same slot more than once.

As a fail-safe mechanism to ensure that corporate resources are available in the national service trust to finance any member's education award, the Corporation will suspend refilling if either:

- total AmeriCorps enrollment reaches 97 percent of awarded slots or
- the number of refills reaches five percent of awarded slots.

Notice to Childcare and Health Care Providers. The grantee must notify the Corporation's designated agents immediately in writing when a member's status changes, such that it would affect eligibility for childcare or health care. Examples of changes in status are converting a full-time member to less than full-time member, terminating or releasing members from service, and suspending members for cause for lengthy or indefinite time periods. Program directors should contact AmeriCorps®Care at NACCRRA at (800) 570-4543 on childcare related changes, and their health insurance provider about health insurance related changes

Corrective Action

Part of being a program director is promoting member development. For many of your members this may be their first time in a professional setting. Viewing corrective action as part of member development can be a great service to you and your members as they learn professional skills and receive regular feedback about positive and inappropriate behavior. Documenting problems as they occur can avoid any potential issues that could cause you to lose a member. It is always preferable to work directly with existing members to correct unsuitable behavior than taking time to refill the member slot. Development of a corrective action plan can help you correct problems before they become serious. Common practices among project directors include:

- ★ Addressing issues early
- ★ Develop a corrective action plan with the member and site supervisor that includes a timeline for change
- ★ Lay out expectations

- ★ Use the member contract as a foundation for agreed upon behavior
- ★ Using a staged disciplinary process: verbal, written, suspension, termination

RELEASE FROM PARTICIPATION

Programs may release members from participation for two reasons: (a) for compelling personal circumstances; and (b) for cause. See 45 C.F.R. §2522.230 for requirements. In addition to the regulations, the following apply:

No Automatic Disqualification if Released for Cause. A release for cause covers all circumstances in which a member does not successfully complete his/her term of service for reasons other than compelling personal circumstances. Therefore, it is possible for a member to receive a satisfactory performance review and be released for cause. For example, a member who is released for cause for a first term for personal reasons – e.g. he/she has decided to take a job offer– but who, otherwise, was performing well up until the time he/she decided to leave, would not be disqualified for a second term as long as he/she received a satisfactory performance evaluation for the period he/she served.

Required Disclosure by Member of Prior Release for Cause. Any individual released for cause who thereafter applies to serve in any AmeriCorps program must disclose the fact that he/ she was released for cause to the Program to which the individual is applying. Failure to disclose that the individual was released for cause from another AmeriCorps Program will make the individual ineligible to receive the AmeriCorps education award.

Releasing a Member for Cause

You will ultimately build an historical file for each of your members from beginning to end that, among other things, encompass your member's service and training hours, your member file checklist (documenting member eligibility), publicity waivers, performance evaluations, and exit forms. There are several ways for a member to leave their term of service: compelling personal circumstances, cause, award, and prorated award.

A release for cause encompasses any circumstances other than compelling personal circumstances that warrant an individual's release from completing a term of service. These could include anything from disciplinary removals pursuant to the program's contract with the member, to the member's decision to leave for any reason that is not a compelling personal circumstance. The term "for cause" does not necessarily have the same meaning as under traditional employment law. Any reason for leaving other than compelling personal circumstances is for cause under the National and Community Service Act of 1990 as amended. Please review the Corporation's regulations (45 C.F.R. § 2522.230) for a more detailed discussion on releasing a member for cause. AmeriCorps programs must release for

cause any participant who is convicted of a felony or the sale or distribution of a controlled substance during a term of service.

What are the consequences of releasing a member for cause?

- ★ The member will not receive any portion of the education award or any other payment from the National Service Trust, including loan forbearance.
- ★ An individual who is released for cause must disclose this fact in any subsequent applications to participate in an AmeriCorps program. Failure to do so disqualifies the individual for an education award, regardless of whether the individual completes a term of service.

You must immediately notify your state service commission, the National Service Trust, health care provider, and, if the member is receiving child care, the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRRA) if you release a member either for compelling personal circumstances or for cause.

In every case where a member leaves a program, you must submit exit information to the Trust using WBRS. WBRS will automatically prompt users to provide justification for early release. The director's reasons for the determination should be as specific and detailed as possible, and should be consistent with the regulations and grant provisions as noted.

Releasing a Member for Compelling Personal Circumstances

If a member wants to leave the program, the member has the primary responsibility for demonstrating that compelling personal circumstances prevent him or her from completing the term of service. You have the authority to determine whether or not the member's reason for leaving is a "compelling personal circumstance."

Programs must document the basis for any determination that compelling personal circumstances prevent the member from completing the term of service. (Program directors should carefully review the detailed procedures specified in the Corporation's regulations (45 C.F.R. § 2522.230) and the AmeriCorps grant provisions.)

Consequences of releasing a member for compelling personal circumstances:

- ★ A participant who is released for compelling personal circumstances and who has completed at least 15 percent of the required term of service is eligible for a pro-rated education award.
- ★ As an alternative to releasing a participant, the program may, after determining that compelling personal circumstances exist, suspend the participant's term of service for up to two years (or longer if approved by the Corporation based on extenuating circumstances) to allow the participant to complete service with the same or a similar AmeriCorps program at a later time.

Charged with a Crime During Service

An AmeriCorps member who is officially charged with a violent felony, or with the sale or distribution of a controlled substance during a term of service will have his/her service suspended without a living allowance and without receiving credit for hours missed. The member may be reinstated into AmeriCorps service if he/she is found not guilty or if the charge is dismissed. If an AmeriCorps member who has been cleared of such charges is unable to complete his/her term of service within one year, he/she may accept a pro-rated education award as long as he/she has completed at least 15% (255 hours full-time/135 hours less than full-time) of his/her service.

An AmeriCorps member who is convicted of a criminal charge as described above must be terminated for cause from the program, and he/she is not eligible for any portion of an education award.

Member Suspension

You may grant permission for a member to leave your program for a “compelling personal circumstance,” and suspend his or her term of service for a period of up to two years. The period of suspension does not count toward a member's required service hours. Further, members who are suspended for minor disciplinary reasons may not receive a living allowance for the suspension period. When the member leaves the program, you must notify your state service commission or Corporation Trust Office (for Tribes and Territories) within 30 days of the suspension. You should make the change online.

Returning a Member to Service After Suspension

After the suspension period, the member may return to the program in which he or she was serving or to a similar AmeriCorps program. When applying to another program after an extended absence, the member provides the director of that program with a copy of the Change of Status/Term Form indicating previous service in another program. If the member is accepted, a Change of Status/Term Form is submitted using WBRS to the appropriate contact agency, which reinstates the member and transfers the hours.

Education Awards

Requirements for Earning and Education Award

A member must not only complete the minimum number of hours for full-time or part-time, but also meet the performance standards established by the program. In addition, the member must serve for the duration of the service program as established. For example, if a program

is an 11-month program with a minimum of 1,800 hours, the member is required to meet those objectives before being certified as eligible for the education award. Such requirements must be delineated in the member contract.

Effective during program year 2002-2003 member terms of service will fall under distinct categories based on the hours of service completed. Members will receive an education award according to the following chart:

<i>Term</i>	<i>Hours completed</i>	<i>Value of Education Award</i>
Full-time	at least 1700	\$ 4,725.00
Half-time	at least 900	\$ 2,362.50
Reduced half-time	at least 675	\$ 1,800.00
Quarter time	at least 450	\$ 1,250.00
Minimum time	at least 300	\$ 1,000.00

Education Award Usage

An AmeriCorps member may use the education award to:

- ★ Repay qualified student loans
- ★ Pay for current educational expenses at a Title IV institution of higher education. The term “current” educational expenses means expenses incurred for a period of enrollment in an institution of higher education that begins after an individual enrolls in a term of service as an AmeriCorps member.
- ★ Pay for expenses incurred in participating in an approved school to work program.

Members can split up their awards to pay a combination of student loans and/or educational expenses. Not all schools or loans are eligible. See the following section for a description of “qualified loans.” The payment will be made to the school or loan holder designated by the member. It cannot be made to the AmeriCorps member. However, as with other federal student assistance, schools may pass on to students certain allowances that are included in the cost of attendance or reimburse students for certain expenses they paid for out-of-pocket. Members have seven years from the end of their term of service to use the awards. A report on how to maximize the benefit of the Education Award, completed by National Service Fellow Brandon Rogers, can be downloaded from the Corporation for National and Community Service website at www.nationaservicerecources.org.

Allowable Education Expenses

If an individual is enrolled in a Title IV eligible program at a Title IV institution of higher education, he or she may use his or her education award to pay for the cost of attending either as a full-time or part-time student. “Cost of attendance” (COA) is a term used by a school’s

Financial Aid Office following rules established by the U.S. Congress and the Department of Education.

The COA is the school's determination of what it will cost a student to go to school for a particular period of time. For a full-time student, it can include tuition and fees, an allowance for books, an allowance for room and board, an allowance for transportation, an allowance for rental or purchase of a computer, and other expenses.

Every Title IV school determines the COA for its students—this is not an amount determined by the member nor by the Trust. This is the amount the school will use to calculate the amount the member is eligible for when completing the Voucher and Payment Request form. The education award can be used to pay that portion of the COA that is not already covered by other sources of financial assistance. A member should be able to find out from the financial aid office what the COA is for a student in a particular program at the school.

Individuals may, however, use the education award to pay for current educational expenses at a Title IV institution of higher education even if the individual is not enrolled in a degree-granting program. For example, an individual may be able to use the education award toward a continuing education course at a Title IV school. As with the cost of attendance, the school will determine what expenses the education award will cover under these circumstances.

Usually, when the school receives the check from the Trust, the school will keep the amount that is due the school (such as tuition, fees, and, if applicable, dorm fees) and will turn over to the student any of the allowances due the student—e.g., the book allowance, transportation allowance, and room and board allowance (if the full-time student is living off campus). This reimbursement is handled in a variety of ways—some schools write the student a check, while others establish an account in the student's name. The school may also reimburse students for these allowable expenses that were previously paid for by the student, as long as the costs are for "current education expenses."

Members should not take their education award vouchers to bookstores or landlords. Checks can only be made directly to qualified schools (and holders of qualified loans).

Loan Forbearance Eligibility

AmeriCorps members are eligible to have the repayment of certain student loans postponed while they are earning an education award. This postponement—called forbearance—is not automatic. Members must request it from their loan holders with the National Service Forbearance Request Form.. The National Service Trust does not grant forbearances; the loan holders do. The Trust merely verifies membership in AmeriCorps and forwards the documents to the loan companies. The Trust is able to verify membership only when it has proof from a project that the individual is an AmeriCorps member.

There are various ways to postpone the repayment of qualified student loans. While members may also be eligible for other types of deferments or forbearances, each with their own special circumstances and limitations, they are encouraged to request forbearance based on national service. If a member wants forbearance based on national service, they should make it clear to their loan holder that they are requesting forbearance for their “national service” in “AmeriCorps.” They should use these two terms when requesting forbearance.

Most qualified student loans that are in default are not eligible for forbearance. For those who have loans that have gone into default before they begin their AmeriCorps service, the member can attempt to negotiate an arrangement with the loan holder (or collection agency) to bring the loan out of default so forbearance can be granted and interest paid.

Under this forbearance, the interest continues to accrue on qualified loans during a member’s term of service. Upon the successful completion of their service, the Corporation for National Service will pay, on behalf of the borrower, all or a portion of the interest that accrued during the service period. This benefit is intended to enable an individual with an outstanding debt to participate in AmeriCorps. This is a benefit above and beyond the education award. The interest payment is not deducted from the amount of the award.

Qualified Loans

The AmeriCorps legislation defines a "qualified" student loan as a loan backed by the federal government under Title IV of the Higher Education Act (except PLUS loans to parents of students) or under Titles VII or VIII of the Public Health Service Act. Now, in addition, a provision in the 2002 appropriations law has expanded this definition to include loans that cover all or part of the student's cost of attendance and that are made directly to the student by a state agency.

For purposes of the AmeriCorps education award, the term "state agency" includes state institutions of higher education. Thus, any loan, including short-term loans, made directly to the student by a state institution of higher education is a qualified loan and the student may repay such a loan with the AmeriCorps education award. If a loan is guaranteed by a state agency (such as a state's Higher Education Authority) but is not made by a state agency, the loan is NOT qualified. A qualified loan must be made by a state agency.

The "maker" of every loan should be listed on the loan's Promissory Note. The maker is the entity that originally issued the loan to the student. The maker of the loan does not change, even if the loan is purchased by another loan company. Thus, a promissory note is the best evidence of who originally made the loan. When a loan is refinanced or consolidated a new loan is created. The new loan must meet the definition of "qualified student loan" in order for the payment to be made using the educational award. The original loan no longer exists.

Some of the most common qualified loans are:

- ★ Stafford Loans
- ★ Perkins Loans
- ★ Federal Direct Loans
- ★ Supplemental Loans for Students (SLS)
- ★ Federal Consolidated Loans
- ★ Health Education Assistance Loans (HEAL) Health Professions Student Loans
- ★ Loans made directly to members by a state agency

Members can use their education awards to repay defaulted student loans, as long as the loans meet the definition of "qualified student loan" described above. If you have any questions about whether a loan meets the definition, please contact the National Service Trust at (888) 507-5962.

Qualified Schools

For the purposes of the education award, a “qualified institution of higher education” is an institution that has a Title IV Program Participation Agreement with the U.S. Department of Education. This simply means that the school has an agreement with the Department of Education whereby students at the school are eligible to receive federal financial assistance (backed by the Department of Education under Title IV of the Higher Education Act) to attend the school.

An institution may be fully accredited, even offering graduate degrees. However, unless it is a school that participates in the U.S. Department of Education’s Title IV financial assistance programs—i.e., a “Title IV school”—the education award cannot be used there.

Eligibility for Interest Payments while Serving

Members are eligible for interest payments while serving. Below is an outline of how this process works.

Exit information must be entered in WBRS and approved by your contact agency as soon as the member ends his or her service. The information will then be sent to the Trust. The Trust is unable to make an interest payment until it has proof that the member has completed service and has earned an award.

Toward the end of the service term (not at the start of service), members should complete an Interest Accrual Form and send it to each of their loan holders, not to the Trust. This form asks the loan holder to compute the total amount of interest that accrued between the beginning and ending dates of their service and gives the loan company permission to provide that information to the Trust.

The loan holder will complete its section and send the form to the Trust. Members can request that they be sent a copy of the information that is sent to the Trust for their own records. The interest payment will be made to the loan holder, not the member. The Trust will pay all or a portion of the interest that accrued during the term of service, even if the member made interest payments during his or her service. Remember, the Trust can pay the interest if the qualified loan was placed in forbearance and if the member received an education award for the service.

According to the IRS, in most cases awards are subject to income taxes in the calendar year in which they are used (not earned). Likewise, interest paid by the Trust is subject to income taxes. The Corporation does not withhold taxes, since it does not know the tax bracket the member will be in for that particular year. The Corporation sends members an IRS Form 1099 to be used in preparing income tax returns.

The portion of the interest that the Trust will pay is based on a formula in the Trust's regulations. That formula takes into account both the number of hours of service and the forbearance (or service) period. Based on the formula, for a member who completes a full-time, 1,700-hour term of service within one year, the Trust will pay 100 percent of the interest that has accrued. For a member who completes a part-time, 900 hour term of service in one year, the Trust will pay approximately 50 percent of the interest that has accrued. Generally, the longer it takes a part-time member to complete the 900-hour term of service, the smaller the percentage of interest the Trust will pay.

Education Awards and Taxes

The IRS has determined that education awards are considered taxable income in the year they are used. If a member uses a portion of an education award in a particular year, only the portion used will be subject to income taxes for that year. If no payment is made from a member's account during a year, there is no tax liability from the award. Likewise, payments the Trust makes for interest that accrued on qualified loans are taxable.

The Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997 created the Hope Scholarship Credit, the Lifetime Learning Credit, as well as a deduction for certain interest payments on qualified student loans. These benefits, which first became available for expenses incurred in 1998, mean that many AmeriCorps members will be able to obtain substantial—in some cases, full-relief from federal taxes on the use of their education awards. The Corporation cannot provide individualized assistance in utilizing these deductions. However, further information about these credits can be obtained from:

- ★ The IRS, www.irs.ustreas.gov/prod/hot/not97-60.html; phone: (800) 829-1040. Or request IRS Publication 970, Tax Benefits for Higher Education, by calling
- ★ (800) TAX-FORM ((800) 829-3676) or by downloading it from the IRS website;

- ★ The Department of Education, www.ed.gov/inits/hope; or
- ★ AmeriCorps Alums, www.americorpsalums.org/edtax.html.

Every January, an IRS form 1099 is mailed to each member who has had interest or education award payments made during the previous year. This notifies members of the amount of miscellaneous income to include on their tax returns. The Trust reports to the IRS all of the payments made on behalf of members for that year. The date the check is issued by the U.S. Treasury (rather than the date requested or the date received) determines the tax year for which the payment is reported.

Chapter 6

Building a Strong Foundation

Strengthening Communities

California AmeriCorps Program Standards

STANDARD FOUR – Community Involvement Design

All AmeriCorps programs are required to perform projects that are designed, implemented, and evaluated with extensive and broad-based local input. This input is provided in consultation with representatives from the community served, AmeriCorps members (or potential AmeriCorps members) in the program, community-based agencies with a demonstrated record of experience in providing services, and local labor organizations representing employees of project sponsors (if such agencies exist in the area to be served by the program).

- 1) Program design involves the broader community in carrying out the efforts to address the community need by providing opportunities for volunteers to participate in program-associated activities and considers:
 - a) The level of volunteering that is needed for the program including the number of volunteers, the number of hours of service for volunteers, whether volunteers will serve on a one-time or re-occurring basis, and the frequency of volunteer service required;
 - b) What volunteer skills and experiences are needed to make the program successful (developing volunteer opportunities and clearly stated goals and objectives for the volunteers);
 - c) A recruitment strategy which strives to achieve broad representation from the community, including making materials accessible to audiences;
 - d) How members will provide the support necessary for volunteers to develop difference and/or higher levels of volunteer responsibility and grown in their personal capacity.
- 2) Program had and utilizes systems for recruiting and maintaining community volunteers as a component to address identified needs.
 - a) Member(s) directly involved in volunteer recruitment activities have clear roles, responsibilities, activities and supervision;
 - b) All members participating in volunteer recruitment and support activities receive training in volunteer recruitment and management skills and best practices;
 - c) Program's volunteer management system includes training, support and recognition of community volunteers.
- 3) Capacity building activities that AmeriCorps members perform enhance the mission, strategy, skills and culture, as well as systems, infrastructure and human resources of an organization that is meeting community needs.
 - a) Capacity building activities are pre-planned, clearly documented on a performance measurement worksheet and have defined end-outcomes;
 - b) Fund raising activities are clearly defined, directly support the efforts of the program and result in no more than 10% of a member's originally agreed upon term of service;
 - c) Member time sheets and WBRS time documentation clearly separates hours spent on fund raising activities from direct service and member training hours.

- 4) AmeriCorps member activities are tracked and documented.
 - a) Program achieves volunteer targets;
 - b) Program has systems to report on results or impacts made by community volunteers.
- 5) Program has developed a marketing and communication plan to publicize program progress and accomplishments to the community:
 - a) Program utilizes effective mechanisms to inform the broader community of progress toward achieving goals and community impact;
 - b) Program has opportunities for the broader community to provide feedback to program design.

Strengthening Communities

AmeriCorps strengthens communities by involving people directly in meeting community needs. AmeriCorps members meet *Strengthening Communities* performance measures in many ways, including performance of capacity building activities (including volunteer recruitment and support) and community awareness events such as national service days. Although programs have the option of engaging members in broader capacity building activities, all programs are required to include a volunteer recruitment and/or support component in their program design.

Capacity Building. Historically, AmeriCorps members have served in direct service roles such as tutoring, while AmeriCorps*VISTA members have served in capacity building roles such as fundraising. Recently, both CV and the Corporation have adopted policies that enable AmeriCorps members to serve in a range of capacity building activities. These capacity building activities impact programs and organizations that benefit from increased ability to provide services in their communities. However, CV also values the traditional direct service focus of AmeriCorps. To preserve this focus while providing programs with a measure of flexibility, CV limits capacity building activities to 10 percent of AmeriCorps member time. **Although this flexibility exists, programs are not required to conduct capacity building activities beyond volunteer recruitment and support.**

Individual AmeriCorps members may not spend more than 10 percent of their term of service engaged in capacity building activities. Activities subject to this restriction include fundraising, partnership development and conducting general community outreach. A program that utilizes members in capacity building activities must track and report on the number of hours members spend on such activities. Further, such programs must develop an outcome measure, to be reported on in the *Strengthening Communities* program design category.

Further, members engaged in fundraising activities must abide by the following restrictions:

- Member fundraising activities must be in support of the program's identified community need, and may not include fundraising activities that provide benefit to the placement site's general operating budget or endowment or that of other programs sponsored by the placement site;
- Members may not fundraise for required matching funds necessary to cover member support costs (living allowances, FICA, worker's compensation, or health insurance) for the program year in which they serve or for future program years;
- Members may not prepare grant applications for funding provided by the Corporation for National and Community Service or *any other federal agency*; and,

- Members may not participate in fundraising activities unless specifically outlined in the position description and agreed to by the member.

Recruitment and Support of Volunteers. While AmeriCorps members and "traditional" volunteers have much in common, a distinction has been frequently made between the two. More often than not, AmeriCorps members serve intensively over a period of one or two years, while traditional volunteers commonly, but not always, serve less intensively. Though this distinction can be unclear, for years AmeriCorps programs have demonstrated the benefits of integrating the efforts of AmeriCorps members and volunteers.

Interest continues to grow in expanding the efforts of AmeriCorps to increase volunteer engagement and effectiveness. With the President's call for all Americans to serve two years – 4,000 hours – in their lifetimes, AmeriCorps has been charged with making volunteer recruitment and management a major focus of its efforts. Research conducted both nationally and statewide has revealed a great untapped interest in volunteering constrained by limited capacity to recruit, manage, and ensure meaningful volunteer opportunities.

Both CV and the Corporation have adopted policies that reflect an increased emphasis on the recruitment and support of volunteers by AmeriCorps programs. By creating volunteer opportunities and helping organizations to effectively engage volunteers, AmeriCorps programs multiply their impact, build organizational capacity, and support the development of sustainable programs.

CV policies require that all AmeriCorps programs and applicants include a volunteer recruitment component in their program design. Programs may also choose to engage members in volunteer support activities. ***Volunteer recruitment*** is defined as recruiting community volunteers to participate in program-associated activities at the site of the legal applicant, placement sites, or partnering organizations. ***Volunteer support*** activities are those in which community volunteers recruited by the program or another organization are trained, given ongoing support, and provided with volunteer recognition upon the completion of their volunteer commitment. ***Programs are only required to recruit volunteers, but are encouraged to do both.*** Programs that include both a volunteer recruitment and support component will receive greater consideration in the grantee selection process.

As part of their service activities, AmeriCorps members must engage community volunteers. This can be achieved by all members of the program participating in these activities or by a few members dedicated solely to this activity. Programs may decide that a few members in a program should be devoted entirely to some aspect of volunteer recruitment and support. Or, programs may determine that all members will spend a portion of their time recruiting and supporting volunteers. Programs can utilize AmeriCorps members in a wide variety of ways.

For example, AmeriCorps members may be responsible for:

- enlisting, training, coordinating and supervising volunteers;
- helping an organization develop effective volunteer management systems that include clear position descriptions, screening and matching techniques, and volunteer policy and procedure manuals;
- understanding how to assess and provide for accommodations for some volunteers; or,
- promoting retention of volunteers by planning recognition events or providing ongoing support to ensure that volunteers have a high quality experience.

All programs are required to post their volunteer opportunities on the California Volunteer Matching Network (www.californiavolunteers.org/hubs.asp).

All members participating in volunteer recruitment and support activities must receive training in best practices associated with volunteer recruitment and support. A program cannot meet the volunteer recruitment and support requirement without engaging AmeriCorps members in these activities.

Volunteers may be recruited for one-time events or episodic events such as national service days, or long-term volunteer commitments. Members may also create opportunities for the beneficiaries of their service to volunteer, including service-learning opportunities. Examples include:

- AmeriCorps members in a teacher corps program engage their students in service-learning projects that support classroom learning and provide students with volunteer experience;
- An AmeriCorps environmental program designates a small number of members as volunteer managers who focus their efforts on recruiting and supporting volunteers who assist members with ongoing community stewardship (i.e., water quality activities);
- AmeriCorps members tutoring in an afterschool program recruit volunteers to read with students once a week so that the program can serve additional students; and,
- An entire corps of AmeriCorps members is dedicated to serving as volunteer coordinators at various local host sites to assist these organizations in recruiting, training, and managing volunteers.

Volunteers may be recruited to support activities that are consistent with the community need identified in the program application. The activities for which volunteers are recruited must be consistent with allowable AmeriCorps member service activities. While on AmeriCorps service time, members may not recruit or support volunteers who are engaged in activities prohibited by AmeriCorps regulations.

Factors to Consider When Designing Your Volunteer Recruitment and Support Component

Effective involvement of volunteers will vary among AmeriCorps programs, depending upon the nature of the service activities and the partnership's capacity to utilize and sustain the efforts of community volunteers. In determining how volunteer recruitment will support the overall mission of the program, applicants should assess their ability to run a volunteer program by considering:

- the level of volunteering that is needed for the program, including the number of volunteers, the number of hours of service for volunteers, whether volunteers will serve on a one-time or recurring basis, and the frequency of volunteer service required;
- what volunteer skills and experiences are needed to make the program successful (developing volunteer job descriptions and clearly stated goals and objectives for the volunteers can assist in making these determinations);
- whether the recruitment strategy is feasible and strives to achieve broad representation from the community, including making materials accessible to audiences from different languages and backgrounds; and,
- how applicants will provide the support necessary for volunteers to develop different and/or higher levels of volunteer responsibility and grow in their personal capacity.

Implementing the Volunteer Recruitment and Support Component

The Volunteer Centers of California describe six keys important in recruiting and supporting volunteers. These six keys include:

Value Volunteers

- Identify and value the contributions volunteers can make
- Delineate between staff and volunteer roles
- Change the agency infrastructure to reflect a belief in volunteerism

Recruitment and Marketing

- Develop volunteer position descriptions, including tasks to be completed, number of hours/frequency, essential qualifications, etc.
- Identify target audiences for recruitment based on needs of volunteer positions
- Describe the organization where volunteer will be placed and the impact the volunteer will have

Selection and Placement

- Interview volunteers and place with the same care as paid staff
- Match volunteer interests and available time with needs of organization

Orientation and Training

- Provide the volunteer with adequate orientation and training, including introductions to key staff, agency norms, and minimum expectations

Ongoing Support and Retention

- Provide volunteers with the same respect you would other agency staff, including providing information regarding upcoming agency events
- Provide volunteers with additional opportunities and/or training depending on their interests and agency needs
- Assign a supervisor and provide feedback

Recognize Volunteers

- Plan recognition events for volunteers
- Provide formal recognition through such programs as the President's Volunteer Service Award program and/or the California Governor and First Lady's Service Award program.

California Volunteer Matching Network (CVMN)

The California Volunteer Matching Network (CVMN) utilizes technology and the expertise of volunteer connector organizations, such as Volunteer Centers, to more effectively connect Californians to volunteer opportunities in their local communities. Over the past two years, CV has been leading a development effort in partnership with Volunteer Centers, nonprofit organizations, and others that launched CVMN on September 26, 2006.

As part of its launch, the California Volunteer Matching Network includes the following components:

- A brand new website (www.californiavolunteers.org) developed and maintained by CV which includes interactive content to encourage Californians to volunteer;
- A searchable database of quality-assured volunteer opportunities accessed through the new website;
- A network of Hub organizations (Volunteer Centers, Hands on Affiliates, etc.) that provide customer service to potential volunteers as well as nonprofit organizations posting volunteer opportunities;
- Capacity to connect spontaneous volunteers generated in times of disaster with the relief and recovery organizations that need them; and,
- A statewide and coordinated local marketing campaign that drives visitors to the new website.

The CVMN is comprised of both a statewide and local presence. A statewide marketing campaign, developed by CV in coordination with key local partners, will drive potential volunteers to the new website. Once there, they will search for volunteer opportunities based on their interested and geographic location. In addition, they will be provided information regarding their local Hub organizations and how to contact them for additional assistance

Local nonprofit organizations and public entities with volunteer needs are encouraged to connect with local Hub organizations. In doing so, organizations will be able to post volunteer opportunities into the statewide system and take advantage of the marketing campaign that will promote the website in the coming months. In addition, the Hub organization will be able to promote volunteer opportunities locally, providing additional exposure.

Volunteer Management Policies

Programs should develop policies and guidelines for site supervisors and members on volunteer recruitment and management. Here are some points to consider:

- ★ What is the role of members in working with volunteers?
- ★ What is/are the role(s) of the volunteers?
- ★ Will members manage volunteers? If so how?
- ★ How can you bring volunteers into the program?
- ★ What demographic characteristics would be most appropriate for volunteers
- ★ From where will community volunteers be recruited?
- ★ How will volunteers be counted? For example, you may need to track multiple facets of volunteer activities: number of volunteers; number of hours; short-term (one time only) vs. long-term volunteering.

Resources

A number of California and national resources can assist you in designing and implementing your volunteer recruitment and support component. These organizations include:

- The California Association of Volunteer Centers, and its member volunteer centers, can provide numerous resources, in-person training, and recruitment/placement relationships. To find the local volunteer center nearest you, visit <http://volunteercentersca.org>.
- The Points of Light Foundation supports the national volunteer center network and provides many resources through its website: www.pointsoflight.org.
- The national United Way and its affiliates throughout the country support community organizations through fundraising, volunteer referral, and advocacy. To find your local United Way, visit: www.unitedway.org.

Appendix

USEFUL ONLINE RESOURCES

Perhaps the most useful online resource is The Corporation's National and Community Service website at nationalserviceresources.org. The center provides online resources, printed publications, effective practices, and training providers among other things. If the links provided are no longer valid, try typing in the topic area into the search area at nationalserviceresources.org.

Recruitment	https://recruit.cns.gov/
Member Enrollment and Program Reporting	http://wbrs.net
AmeriCorps Gear and Signage	www.nationalservicecatalog.org
Training and Technical Assistance Providers	http://nationalserviceresources.org/resources/tta/index.php
National Service Calendar	http://www.nationalserviceresources.org/calendar
AmeriCorps Provisions and Guides	http://americorps.gov/for_organizations/tta/index.asp
AmeriCorps Legislation	http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/role_impact/history.asp
AmeriCorps Alumni	http://lifetimeofservice.org
Information about Education Award	http://cns.gov/fpr_organizations/highered/ed_award.asp
All national service programs funded by CNCS	www.nationalservice.org
State Profiles	http://www.americorps.gov/about/role_impact/state_profiles.asp
Sample forms	http://cns.gov/for_organizations/tta/index.asp
Pledge certificates	http://www.nationalservicecatalog.org/ProductDetails.aspx?productID=PLEDGE

Frequently Used Terms Related to AmeriCorps

Consistent use of basic terms helps reinforce the common overall mission of AmeriCorps and helps clarify AmeriCorps for the public. Here are some frequently used terms related to AmeriCorps:

AmeriCorps **National Service Network** means AmeriCorps*State, AmeriCorps*National, AmeriCorps*Tribes and Territories, Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), and National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC); programs taken together as programs dedicated to national service. VISTA is authorized under the Domestic Volunteer Service Act (42U.S.C. 4950 *et seq.*). NCCC is authorized under the National and Community Service Act (42 U.S.C. 12611 *et seq.*).

Approved National Service Position means a national service position for which the Corporation has approved the provision of a national service education award as one of the benefits to be provided for successful service in the position.

Faith-based organizations include:

- a. Religious congregations (church, mosque, synagogue, temple, etc.);
- b. Organizations, programs, or projects operated or sponsored by a religious congregation;
- c. Nonprofit organizations that clearly show by their mission statements, policies, and/or practices that they are religiously motivated or religiously guided institutions;
- d. Organizations that, when asked, designate themselves as a faith-based or religious organization; or
- e. Collaborations of organizations lead by an organization from the previously described categories, or of which half or more of the members are from the previously described categories.

Grantee, for the purposes of this agreement, means the direct recipient of this grant. The term sub-grantee shall be substituted for the term grantee where appropriate. The grantee is also responsible for ensuring that sub-grantees or other organizations carrying out activities under this award comply with these provisions, including regulations and OMB circulars incorporated by reference. The grantee is legally accountable to the Corporation

Living allowances

AmeriCorps members earn living allowances—not salaries or wages for the use of grant funds and is bound by the provisions of the grant.

Member means an individual:

- f. Who is enrolled in an approved national service position;
- g. Who is a U.S. citizen, U.S. national or lawful permanent resident alien of the United States;
- h. Who is at least 17 years of age at the commencement of service unless the member is out of school and enrolled
 - i. in a full-time, year-round youth corps Program or full-time summer Program as defined in the Act (42 U.S.C. 12572 (a) (2)), in which case he or she must be between the ages of 16 and 25, inclusive, or
 - ii. in a Program for economically disadvantaged youth as defined in the Act (42 U.S.C. 12572 (a)(9)), in which case he or she must be between the ages of 16 and 24, inclusive; and
 - iii. Has a high school diploma or an equivalency certificate (or agrees to obtain a high school diploma or its equivalent before using an education award) and who has not dropped out of elementary or secondary school in order to enroll as an AmeriCorps member (unless enrolled in an institution of higher education on an ability to benefit basis and is considered eligible for funds under section 484 of the Higher Education Act of 1965, 20 U.S.C. 1091), or who has been determined through an independent assessment conducted by the Program to be incapable of obtaining a high school diploma or its equivalent.

AmeriCorps members should not be called *volunteers, workers, staff, or employees*. The word *member* is lowercase.

Parent Organization means a grantee that is responsible for implementing and managing a National Direct AmeriCorps or National Direct Education Award Program.

Service-learning

“Service-learning is an educational method that engages young people in service to their communities as a means of enriching academic learning, promoting personal growth, and helping them to develop the skills needed for productive citizenship” (Dunlap, N.C., Drew, S.F. and Gibson, K. (1994) Serving to Learn: K8 Manual. Columbia, S.C: South Carolina Department of Education).

Service Recipient means a community beneficiary who receives a service or benefit from the service of AmeriCorps members.

Sub-grantee refers to an organization receiving AmeriCorps grant funds from a grantee of the Corporation.

USA Freedom Corps

A major initiative by President Bush to promote citizen service in the United States and abroad. Coordinated through a White House council, the USA Freedom Corps includes national service programs, Peace Corps, and the new Citizen Corps, which focuses on homeland security. The initiative also includes the President's call for every American to devote the equivalent of at least two years of their lives - or 4,000 hours - in service to others.

CNCS Strategic Initiatives

For the five-year period 2006-2010, the Corporation for National and Community Service has identified four strategic focus areas where National Service programs are already leading the way and where CNCS intends to make an even more profound difference. Each of these focus areas—Mobilizing More Volunteers, Ensuring a Brighter Future for All of America's Youth, Engaging Students in Communities, and Harnessing Baby Boomers' Experience—requires programs and initiatives work together to achieve critical common objectives.

Mobilizing More Volunteers

Since President Bush issued his call to service in 2002, nearly six million more Americans have begun volunteering in their communities to help meet critical needs, including responding to and preparing communities for disasters. In order to continue that upward trend, CNCS is committed to supporting faith and community-based nonprofit organizations as they develop the capacity to recruit and manage additional volunteers.

National Targets for 2010

- ★ Engage 75 million Americans in volunteering, up from 65.4 million in 2005

Corporation Target for 2010

- ★ 4 million community volunteers recruited and managed annually by Corporation-funded programs

Ensuring a Brighter Future for All of America's Youth

While all children and youth can benefit from additional support, youth who grow up in severely distressed communities are more likely to be at risk of school failure, unemployment, criminal behavior, and persistent poverty. The Corporation plans to provide caring adults as mentors for youth from disadvantaged circumstances and to provide more opportunities for all of America's youth to serve their communities.

National Targets for 2010

- ★ Provide mentoring services to 3 million additional children and youth from disadvantaged circumstances, up from 2.5 million in 2002
- ★ Engage over 3 million children and youth from disadvantaged circumstances in service

Corporation Target for 2010

- ★ Engage over 2.2 million children and youth from disadvantaged circumstances in national service

Engaging Students in Communities

Educational institutions play a key role in guiding students to become responsible citizens. The Corporation is committed to using our resources strategically to help educational institutions at all levels increase volunteer and service-learning opportunities for youth.

National Targets for 2010

- ★ Engage 5 million college students in service, up from 3.27 million in 2005
- ★ Ensure at least 50 percent of America's K-12 schools incorporate service-learning into their curricula

Corporation Target for 2010

- ★ Double the number of higher education institutions matching the AmeriCorps education award (received by AmeriCorps members for their service) or providing other incentives for volunteering

Harnessing Baby Boomers' Experience

Baby Boomers are a highly talented, highly motivated group that can help solve some of our most challenging social problems, including helping seniors live independently. The Corporation plans to support communities as they capture the talents, skills, energy, and experience of Baby Boomers and older Americans to meet local and national needs.

National Target for 2010

- ★ Engage an additional 3 million Baby Boomers in volunteering, up from 25.8 million in 2005

Corporation Targets for 2010

- ★ Engage 500,000 Baby Boomers in Corporation- sponsored national service programs, as participants and recruited volunteers
- ★ Provide 250,000 seniors support from Corporation- sponsored national service programs to live independently